



HELEN & MICHAEL
OPPENHEIMER

The Blessed Virgin Mary



ESSAYS BY ANGLICAN WRITERS

Edited by

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and

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PREFACE

THIS is a collection of essays, but, in the ordinary sense of the word, it can hardly be described as a symposium. It makes no claim to represent a common point of view and, with a few exceptions, the contributors have not even read one another's essays; it follows, therefore, more emphatically than with many collective works, that none of the writers is committed to any statements other than his own. The book does, however, bear witness to a common conviction on the part of a number of Anglicans, namely that the Blessed Mother of the Lord has been badly neglected in recent Anglican theology and that, for the sake of the Anglican Communion and of Christendom as a whole, it is desirable that this neglect should be corrected. In accordance with the nature of the work, no attempt has been made to reconcile differences of view or even to impose uniformity in such matters as translation.

E. L. M.

H. S. B.

I

*The Blessed Virgin Mary*¹

H. Edward Symonds, C.R.

The necessity of believing our Saviour to be thus born of the Virgin Mary, will appear both in respect of her who was the Mother, and of him who was the Son. In respect of her, it was therefore necessary that we might perpetually preserve an esteem of her person proportionable to so high a dignity. It was her own prediction 'from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed', but the obligation is ours to call her, to esteem her so. If Elisabeth cried out with so loud a voice, 'Blessed art thou among women', when Christ was but newly conceived in her womb; what expressions of honour and admiration can we think sufficient, now that Christ is in heaven, and that Mother with him? Far be it from any Christian to derogate from that special privilege granted her, which is incommunicable to any other. We cannot bear too reverent a regard unto the Mother of our Lord, so long as we give her not that worship which is due unto the Lord himself. Let us keep the language of the primitive church; 'Let her be honoured and esteemed, let him be worshipped and adored.'

These words are those of Bishop Pearson in his famous work on the Creed.²

The doctrine of the Incarnation of the Son of God involves, as Bishop Pearson saw, a doctrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary, his Mother. Let us consider first her co-operation with the work of the Holy Spirit by which God became man. The Incarnation was wholly a divine work, but it involved the taking of real human nature from a human stock. ('He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham', Heb 2:16.) And this demanded the co-operation of a human mother. For if our Lord took real human nature,

¹ The contents of this chapter first appeared as an article in the *Church Quarterly Review* for January-March 1960.

² Art iii, ed 1854, p. 261.

he received his flesh from his mother, as much as any other human child. Now Mary's conception of the Incarnate Lord was of course the work of grace, the special activity of the Holy Spirit. But grace does not abolish the freedom of the human will. Catholics cannot agree with Luther when he says 'Mary does nothing, God does (all)', but rather with St Augustine, who says, 'God who created thee without thyself will not save thee without thyself.' Mary played her part in the Incarnation by her faith in the message of the Angel, and her consent to offer herself for the fulfilment of the divine will. This is clear not only from her own words, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it unto me according to thy word', but also from St Elisabeth's encomium of her at the Visitation. 'Blessed is she that believed. There shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord.' (Lk 1:45—where Mary's belief is implicitly contrasted with the disbelief of Zacharias.) But the fact that Mary was not just the passive instrument but the free co-operator with God in bringing about the Incarnation means that the redemption of the world depended, in the divine condescension, on the consent of Mary. It would be vain to speculate as to whether, if Mary had refused, some other woman could have been found to fulfil the Divine purpose. For in Mary we see the culmination of God's dealing with Israel, fitting that people for the knowledge of him and his law and Divine purpose, revealing himself in special measure to those holy and humble men of heart who formed the little group of those who with Zacharias, Elisabeth, and Simeon were looking for the redemption of Israel. And it was in that circle that Mary was born and grew as the chosen vessel of Divine grace. Addressed by St Gabriel as 'thou that art highly favoured', or as the word should be translated 'endued with grace' (R.V. margin), or *plena gratia* ('full of grace') in the version of the Vulgate. It seems impossible therefore that any other woman than Mary could have been the human agent of the Incarnation. Consequently faithful Christians have regarded her with a gratitude which they cannot show to any other of the saints.

As all Catholic doctrine is based on the divine revelation which has been handed down by the Church, but is sufficiently recorded in Holy Scripture, we rightly look for the position which Mary occupies in the New Testament. The narratives

of our Lord's infancy, especially those of St Luke, are naturally full of his Mother, and the highest position is given to her in the records of the Annunciation and the Visitation including Elisabeth's greeting of her as 'Blessed among women', and her wonder that the Mother of her Lord has come to visit her. This is answered by the Magnificat in which Mary with full consciousness of her 'low estate' yet prophesies that all generations shall call her blessed, because the Lord has done to her great things. She is represented however as not fully understanding the nature and mission of her Son, especially perhaps at the finding of him in the Temple. But we are told that she kept the words of the Holy Child and the events of his life and pondered them in her heart.³

During his earthly ministry she withdraws into the background, after playing a prominent part in the miracle of Cana which the Evangelist probably wishes to show was worked at her intercession, in spite of the apparent rebuke which was meant to test her faith, and at the same time to show her that the days of the intimacy of the home at Nazareth were over, and only to be renewed when his hour was come in the Passion and the new life beyond it. She is however mentioned as coming with his Brethren to seek Jesus when he was teaching the multitude. And it is on that occasion that, looking round on those gathered before him, he says, 'Behold my mother and my brethren. For whosoever doeth the will of God, the same is my brother and my sister and mother.'⁴ And on another occasion when a woman of the crowd says, 'Blessed is the womb that bare thee and the paps which thou hast sucked', he replies, 'Yea rather blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.'⁵ These utterances show that our Lord valued spiritual attachment to God above the closest physical ties. But the words need not be a rebuke even to his brethren although St John tells us that for a time they did not believe on him.⁶ As to his mother it is quite clear from St Luke's narrative of the Infancy that she always heard the word of God, above all at the Annunciation, and kept the divine words and actions in her heart. But it may be true that even Mary had to learn that the work of the ministry must for a time separate our Lord from his earthly relations.

3 Lk 2:19, 51.

4 Mk 3:34.

5 Lk 11:27.

6 7:5.

Mary appears again at the Cross when Simeon's prophecy of the sword piercing through her own soul is fulfilled, and it was to her that our Lord spoke the third of his seven words, in commending her to the beloved disciple to be his mother henceforth. There is however no recorded appearance of the risen Lord to her, probably because her faith needed no such assurance and she received the blessing pronounced by our Lord on those who have not seen and yet have believed,⁷ but we see her in the company of the Apostles waiting in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Ghost.⁸ Lastly there is the vision of the woman clothed with the sun, surrounded by the twelve stars and with the moon under her feet in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse. The woman is undoubtedly the symbol of the Church of the old covenant which continues as the Church of the Messiah who has already come. But it is difficult, if not impossible, to believe that it does not represent Mary also, in whom the Jewish Church reaches its culminating point and through whom it gave birth to the promised Messiah, 'She brought forth a man child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron, and her child was caught up to God and to his throne.'⁹

It is on these facts that the Mariology of the Church has been built up and developed. Some of that development indeed may have been erroneous and superstitious, and as such cannot claim to be guaranteed by the infallible teaching of the whole Catholic Church. But some developments can claim to be based on revealed fact and doctrine. Let us consider some of them.

First she is regarded as the second Eve. The parallel between Eve and Mary is made first by Justin Martyr, *c.* A.D. 150, 'Eve a virgin receiving the word of the serpent brought forth disobedience and death, while Mary the Virgin receiving faith and joy answers "Be it unto me according to thy word".'¹⁰ Tertullian, *c.* A.D. 200, representing the tradition of the North African Church, writes, 'Eve had believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel; the sin which the former committed by believing, the latter by believing has destroyed.'¹¹ Irenaeus representing the tradition of Asia Minor and Rome, and slightly earlier than Tertullian, says of Eve that she became the cause of death, so

⁷ Jn 20:29.
¹⁰ *Dialogus c. Trypho.*, 101.

⁸ Acts 1:14.
¹¹ *De carne Christi*, xvii.

⁹ Rev 12:5.

Mary became the cause of salvation for herself and for the whole human race.¹² Epiphanius of Salamis in Cyprus, 320-400, draws the parallel between Eve and Mary, calling her the mother of all living (things).¹³

The greatest title given to Mary is however that of *Theotokos*, or Mother of God. This title became the watchword of St Cyril of Alexandria in his conflict with Nestorius and was canonized by the third oecumenical Council held at Ephesus in A.D. 430. The expression however is much older and can be traced back to Origen, and was used by St Athanasius, St Cyril of Jerusalem, and by the Cappadocian Fathers. It does not of course mean that Mary is the Mother of our Lord's divine nature, but that she did bring into this world the one who was from all eternity the Son of God, the one eternal Person who chose Mary from whom to take his human flesh when he became man. Mary gave a human nature to the Eternal Son. She was not merely a channel through which a newly created nature passed, as the Gnostic Valentinus maintained. The title *Theotokos* therefore emphasizes the special privilege of Mary, which sets her far above all other creatures, as St Elisabeth surely recognized when she said, 'What is this to me, that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?' What it does not do is to assign anything approaching divine nature to Mary, or in any sense to make her a goddess. Such words are utterly shocking to Catholics, who know that the difference between Mary and her Son is not merely great but is equivalent to the infinite chasm between the creature and the Creator.

Furthermore, Mary is recognized as the mother of all Christian people from at least the time of Origen, who says, 'No one will be able to understand the meaning [of St John's Gospel] if he has not leaned on the breast of Jesus and received from Jesus the one who has become his mother also. Because Christ lives in him, the words are said to Mary of him, "Behold thy Son the Christ".'¹⁴ This motherhood is perpetual, for the Incarnation is a permanent reality not a merely past event. Our Lord retains his human Nature in Heaven. Therefore Mary is still his Mother, but also the Mother of the Church which is his Body, the living organism of Christ's glorified human Nature and of each of its members, who are made her

¹² *Adv. Haer.*, iii, 22.

¹³ *Adv. Haer.*, 78, 18. 2.

¹⁴ *Ev. Johann.*, I., 6.

adopted, not her natural children, by their baptismal incorporation into the human Nature of her Son.

But a further question is, how does our Lady exercise this motherhood? The answer is by love, and by intercession. There can be no doubt that the saints exercise charity, the crown of Christian virtues, in Heaven. And that charity which is primarily directed towards God is, as the New Testament teaches, empty and worthless if it does not include the love of man, specially of our fellow-members in the Body of Christ. And this love finds its chief (though not its only) expression, in the case of the saints in Heaven, in intercession. In the form ¹⁵ for the Commemoration of King Charles the prayer occurs that 'by a careful-imitation of this thy Blessed saint, and martyrs that have gone before us, we may be made worthy to receive benefit by their prayers, which they, in communion with the Church Catholic, offer up unto thee for that part of it here militant'. But while many of the best Anglican theologians of the seventeenth century recognize the intercession of the saints for the Church Militant in general (e.g., Andrews, Bull, and Richard Field), few would admit the lawfulness of invoking them directly, that is of asking them for their prayers. Bishop Forbes of Edinburgh (1634), however, says the practice is not to be condemned either as unlawful or as useless. After an exhaustive examination of the Fathers he concludes:

Let God alone be religiously adored; let him alone be prayed to, through Christ, Who is the only and sole mediator, truly and properly speaking, between God and man. Let not the very ancient custom received in the universal Church, as well Greek and Latin, of addressing the Angels and saints after the manner we have mentioned, be condemned or rejected as impious, nor even as vain and foolish.¹⁶

It has been urged however that we have no certainty that the saints can hear our prayers, or that, if they are aware of the prayers of the Church in general, they are conscious of individual requests. In particular it has been maintained that it would be impossible for our Lady to hear every Hail Mary addressed to her, without ascribing to her something akin to divine omniscience.

¹⁵ V. Hutton, *The English Church from Charles I to Anne*, p. 194. The words quoted are found in the first draft only.

¹⁶ *Works*, ii. 211, 213.

It may be answered however that the Church neither in the East nor in the West has ever officially declared that the saints are aware of our individual petitions. The Council of Trent is content with laying down that 'it is good and useful to invoke them [the saints] by way of supplication [*suppliciter*] and to take refuge in [*confugere ad*] their prayers support and help'. It condemns only those who say that they ought not to be invoked, or that they do not pray for men. But it carefully refrains from asserting that they hear our individual petitions.

If however St Gregory and St Thomas are right in their speculation that the saints in their contemplation of the eternal Word see all that is fitting for them of earthly affairs, it must be true that our Lady has a greater knowledge of them than all other saints. It may be difficult to believe that she hears every individual Hail Mary addressed to her, but we have no right to set limits to the heightened consciousness which must belong to those who enjoy the vision of God.

This consciousness, however, is that which belongs to a creature, and is by no means akin to the omniscience which is the peculiar prerogative of God himself. But no one could be accused of heresy, even on Western standards, if he thought that the devout saying of the Hail Mary brought him and his needs into the stream of effectual prayer made by our Lady, without her actual consciousness of all particular requests. There are other considerations however in favour of the view that the saints hear us. There is actual evidence for this belief in the New Testament. Heb 12:1 says: 'Therefore let us also being compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses ["martyrs", alluding to the heroes of faith in the preceding chapter] run with patience ["endurance"] the race which is set before us', where the witnesses, though primarily witnesses to their faith suggest at least, as Westcott points out, 'spectators' looking on at our earthly struggle in running the race appointed for us Christians. This is confirmed by the picture of the heavenly Jerusalem in the same chapter to which Christians on earth are now come, with the solemn assembly of the firstborn and the spirits of just men made perfect. (Verse 23.)

In addition to this there are special prerogatives which have been assigned to Mary.

First, the character of her conception. Her freedom from

actual sin has with some few exceptions been recognized by all the Fathers. St Augustine for instance says: 'All have sinned except the Holy Virgin Mary, concerning whom for the honour of the Lord I wish no question to be raised at all, when we are treating of sins.'¹⁷ St Chrysostom is the only serious exception. Chrysostom says that she came with his brethren to our Lord to show her power over him. He stigmatizes their combined conduct as 'recklessness' and calls our Lord's words on that occasion a considerable rebuke.¹⁸ And he has a parallel passage on the Miracle of Cana.

She [Mary] wished to make herself more illustrious through her Son. And perhaps she had some human feeling, like his brethren who said to him 'Show Thyself to the World.' When [parents] require anything unseasonable and cause hindrance in any spiritual matter it is unsafe to obey. . . . She claimed to direct him in all things—wherefore he rebuked her, saying: 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' Instructing her for the future not to do the like.

But the holiness of Mary has indeed been recognized in all Christian tradition, especially in the East, as to her freedom from actual sin. She is in the Eastern hymn 'higher than the Cherubim, more glorious than the Seraphim', and is constantly called the All Holy.

The question of her conception, however, was raised explicitly only in the West, about the time of the early schoolmen such as St Bernard and St Anselm. These saints, followed by St Thomas Aquinas, recognized that like St John the Baptist and the prophet Jeremiah, she was sanctified in the womb. They denied, however, that she was free from original sin from the moment of her conception, on the ground that this would derogate from the unique position of our Lord as alone without sin, and conceived without sin in virtue of his virginal conception. They also stressed the fact that Mary, like all other members of the human race, needed redemption, whereas if her soul was never stained with sin, she would not have needed a Redeemer. Duns Scotus, however, maintains that Mary was, in fact, preserved from original sin. But this does not mean that she needed no Redeemer; for her preservation from original sin

¹⁷ *De Natura et Gratia*, 42.

¹⁸ In Matt. Hom. XLIV, M.P.G., 57-465.

was due solely to the grace of the Mediator, our Lord. He regards this view, however, as probable rather than certain, because it seems 'probable to attribute to Mary what is more excellent, namely that she was never an enemy to God'. The doctrine, therefore, remained only a pious opinion in the Roman Church till Pius IX in 1854 defined that Mary was in the first instance of her conception, by the singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, by his foresight (*intuitu*) of the merits of Christ Jesus the Saviour of the human race, preserved free from all stain of original guilt.¹⁹

Anglicans, of course, are not bound by this papal decree, and many would agree with Dollinger that it is a question on which nothing has been revealed, but they would hesitate to reject it, as the Old Catholics did at Bonn, as a new doctrine contrary to the tradition of the first thirteen centuries. They would rather agree with Dr Liddon's amendment that it is not an Article of the Catholic Faith, which leaves it open to be held as a pious opinion. There is much to be said in favour of this. The doctrine may be defective in scriptural foundation. But one of the values of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception is that it seems to correct the unwholesome doctrine (deriving from St Augustine) that the act of human generation in fallen man is necessarily accompanied by sin.

All orthodox Christians must believe that Mary received a unique sanctification to fit her for her high privilege, and this is implied in the Angelic salutation 'Hail full of grace' (which seems the best rendering of *kecharitomene*). The question is, when did she receive it? Certainly prior to the Annunciation. If ordinary Christians receive sanctifying grace in their baptism as infants, which frees them from the guilt or stain of original sin, and there was nothing analogous to baptism in the case of our Lady, it would seem most natural that she should have received that grace at the first moment of her existence rather than at any subsequent moment, and in virtue of that grace was never at enmity with God who chose her to be the Mother of his Son.

Dr Pusey in a letter to Cardinal Newman found nothing inherently difficult in the doctrine of an infusion of grace at the first moment of Mary's conception.²⁰

19 Denzinger, 1641.

20 *Life*, by H. P. Liddon, iv, 164.

But there are certain titles ascribed to our Lady in modern times which may rightly give us pause. In the Roman communion Mary has been constantly called the Mediator of all graces. This somewhat startling expression may be understood in two senses.

The first of these presents no difficulty. It means that Mary as the Mother of the Incarnate Lord is the human instrument which God used to bring about the Incarnation, and therefore all the graces which flow from the Incarnate Son.

In the second sense, however, Mary is regarded as the means by which our Lord now bestows all his graces. It is recognized that her mediation is indeed one of intercession, and also proceeds through the one real Mediator, Jesus Christ. Like the mediation of the saints in general, it can be understood only in a secondary sense, according to which any intercessory prayer is an act of mediation. But the idea that all graces are due to the intercession of Mary cannot be clearly traced to any Father or theologian earlier than the twelfth century, when St Bernard calls Mary the divinely appointed aqueduct of grace. In the following century Richard of St Lawrence terms her the neck of the Mystical Body of Christ, an expression explained by Pius X as meaning 'that by which all spiritual gifts are communicated to his [Christ's] mystical body'. This teaching was confirmed by Benedict XV when he approved the Mass of Mary Mediator of all Graces. In any case this title seems most misleading and likely to militate against the unique mediation of our Lord.

Another title has been given to our Lady, though chiefly in Post-Tridentine theology, namely that of Co-redemptrix or Co-redeemer. It is assigned to her mainly from the fact that she stood by the Cross on Calvary. She is therefore regarded as having co-operated with our Lord in his Sacrifice. But St Ambrose long ago pointed out that the Passion of Christ did not need any assistance.²¹ That Mary had some share in the redemptive sacrifice of our Lord is indeed clear from Simeon's prophecy 'a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also'.²² And we may remember that St Paul claims to fill up what is wanting in the sufferings of Christ for his Body's sake. If the Apostles and other saints throughout the history of the Church

²¹ *De Institutione Virginis*, 7. 49. M. P. L. 16. 333.

²² Lk 2. 35.

can regard their sufferings borne in union with those of our Lord as benefiting the Church, much more can the same be said of the sorrows of our Lady at the time of the Passion. But no New Testament writer ever suggested that our Lord's work in offering the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world needed completion from some other source. All that can be truly said in this connection is that the sufferings and prayers of the saints can help in bringing the grace won by our Lord to bear on the needs of some particular soul.

It is hoped that this discussion may clear up some misconceptions on the subject of Mariology, that is to say the doctrine about Mary which is found in the Scriptures and the teaching of the universal Church. It is of course utterly distinct from Mariolatry, which means any doctrine which would give to Mary the divine worship which is due only to our Lord as the Incarnate God. The best way of correcting such errors is not to neglect or to belittle devotion to his Mother, but to set forth her rightful place in the economy of redemption, and the rightful attitude of Christian people to the Mother of their Lord (as is done by Bishop Pearson in the famous passage quoted at the beginning of this essay). We must never forget that the orthodox Christians of the East are never tired of praising the *Theotokos* or Mother of God, and that if we hope for ultimate reunion with them, as with Catholics of the Roman obedience, we must show as Anglicans a real understanding of her place in the mystery of redemption, and her position as exalted by God himself above all his other creatures, 'higher than the Seraphim, more glorious than the Cherubim', because she is the 'Bearer of the Eternal Word', yet all the time remaining, as we have already said, a creature separated from the divine nature by the gulf fixed between the creature and the creator.

II

Theotokos: The Place of Mary in the Work of Salvation

E. L. Mascall

IT is always important that there should be the closest connection between Christian devotion and Christian doctrine, and between any one department of Christian doctrine and the dogmatic corpus as a whole. Nowhere is this truer than in those realms of doctrine and devotion that concern the Blessed Virgin Mary. It is because they cannot see any connection between Mariology and the rest of Christian doctrine that most Protestants look upon any kind of Marian devotion as not only dangerous but also pointless; while, at the other extreme, when Catholic devotion to Mary has become distorted or unbalanced it has nearly always been because its connection with the main body of Christian truth has fallen out of view. It is thus a most welcome fact that two of the most readable recent books on Mariology—Père Congar's *Le Christ, Marie, et l'Église* and Père Bouyer's *Le Trône de la Sagesse*¹—are firmly based upon the doctrine of the Incarnation and of the Church. 'No Mariology without Christology' is a very good maxim in this field of study, and in accordance with it I shall take as my starting point the declaration made by the Council of Ephesus in the year 431 that Mary is the Mother of God. This is still what might be called her official liturgical title in the Eastern Church (in contrast to the Catholic West, for which she is 'Blessed Mary the Virgin' liturgically, and usually 'our Lady' more informally)—*Theotokos* in Greek, *Bogoroditsa* in Slavonic, and in Arabic *wālidat allah*: mother of Allah or God.

Some English writers have claimed to see some subtle in-

¹ Translated into English as *Christ, our Lady, and The Church* and *Woman and Man with God* respectively.

accuracy in the translation of *Theotokos* by 'Mother of God' and have coined the barbarism 'Birth-giver of God' in its place. ('Godmother' is clearly excluded as having already acquired a different meaning, and 'god-bearer', owing to the ambiguity of the English verb 'bear', would as adequately render the term *theophoros*, which the orthodox used to describe the Nestorian heretics' concept of Christ, as the term *theotokos*, which they used to describe their own concept of his mother.) In fact there is little substance in the objection and still less in the implied divergence between East and West. Latin has the terms *Deipara* and *Dei genetrix*, and every Greek and Russian icon of the *Theotokos* bears on her halo the contraction $\overline{\text{MP}} \overline{\Theta\Upsilon}$ for *Mētēr Theou*, quite literally 'Mother of God'.

The truth that Mary is Theotokos was proclaimed at Ephesus against the heresy known as Nestorianism, which not only distinguished but separated the human and the divine nature of our Lord, so as in effect to make him not one Christ, but two. Whether this view was in fact held by Nestorius is a matter of dispute among historians today, but of the existence of the heresy there is no doubt. Our Lord, on this view, was a very holy man with whom the Second Person of the Holy Trinity formed a very, and indeed uniquely, close association; but Jesus and the eternal Son of God were no more one person than a very devoted husband and wife are one person. They were no doubt 'two souls with but a single thought, two hearts that beat as one', but they were two distinct beings, so that the things which happened to our Lord in his earthly life happened not to the divine Logos, the eternal Son, but to Jesus, his human partner. It was the special boast of the Nestorians, and one which their opponents did not find it very easy to meet, that their doctrine of the Incarnation safeguarded the impassibility of God.

It was in order to rule out such views as this and to defend the unity of Christ that the Church found it necessary to insist that Mary was not only *Christotokos*, the Mother of Christ, but *Theotokos*, the Mother of God; not just the mother of a man with whom the eternal Son formed a specially close partnership but the giver of human nature to God himself, since he who took human nature in her womb and to whom she gave human birth was none other than the Second Person of the Holy Trinity.

The declaration of the Council of Ephesus was, as we have seen, intended primarily to ensure the truth about the Incarnation and about the incarnate Lord, but once this has been made clear certain consequences inevitably follow about his mother. It is well known that one of the results of the Ephesian definition was a great efflorescence of devotion to the Mother of God, and it has sometimes been alleged that this was due to an illicit transference to her of an emphasis which Ephesus intended to place upon her Son. Ephesus, it is said, named Mary as *Theotokos* not to give glory to her but to safeguard the truth about him. It is, however, surely truer to say that devotion was simply drawing the logical consequences of the more explicit understanding that the Church had now acquired of the nature and the circumstances of the Incarnation. If, so far as his conception was concerned, Jesus had been an ordinary human being, with whom the eternal Son entered into some specially close association, there would be no difference between the relation which his mother had to him and the relation which any mother has to her son; and this would still be the case even if the circumstances of his birth were miraculous. But if what took place in the Incarnation was not just the bringing into existence of another human being but the actual taking of human nature by the pre-existent Son of God, if the Word *became flesh*, then the relation between Mary and her Son was radically different from the relation which any other human mother has to her son, and indeed the relation between Mary and the Holy Trinity, between Mary and God, was radically different from the relation which any other human being has to God. So there are immediate implications regarding Mary which arise out of the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation. So true is this that when people object to devotion to Mary it will often be found that underlying their objection is an erroneous view of the Incarnation.

This is not always the case. People are often influenced by misunderstanding or prejudice, or simply by the fact that they have never thought through to their conclusion the implications of the beliefs which they explicitly hold. I have, however, a vivid memory of a devout Christian who argued *a fortiori* against devotion to Mary on the ground that even her Son, as man, was not a legitimate object of devotion, since his manhood was

(it was alleged) simply the passive instrument of the godhead. This was, of course, a quasi-monophysite rather than a Nestorian objection. Heresies have, however, an extraordinary way of turning inside-out into their opposites; and I have argued elsewhere² that almost *any* Christological heresy weakens the link between Mary and her Son.

Mary, then, has quite a unique place in the scheme of redemption; as the divine Word can never become incarnate as man more than once, nobody can ever have the relation to him and the place in the whole scheme of redemption which is held by Mary. One of its most striking aspects is that Mary is located within the process of redemption from the start. Whereas other human beings have to wait until the process is complete before it can be applied to them and before they can become God's agents in its extension to the rest of the human race, Mary has been involved in the very process which has redeemed her.

Furthermore, it must be observed that, although Mary had a quite definite physical role in the Incarnation (that is to say, she was the agent and instrument which the Son of God employed in order to become man), she had a moral role as well. God did not merely seize her and use her for his purpose without any choice on her part, though no doubt he could have done so had he wished. Mary might, without being consulted in the matter, have found herself to be the mother of the incarnate Word. This would have been a most wonderful privilege, but it would have carried no special moral connotation with it. If, as the result of the death of a rich relation in Australia, a man in England finds that he has inherited an enormous fortune, he is no doubt to be envied, but not necessarily to be admired; it has just come his way without his being consulted. However, in the Incarnation Mary was consulted. The Angel of the Lord brought tidings unto Mary, and she conceived by the Holy Ghost, as the first versicle and response of the Angelus tells us. But the second versicle and response remind us that she was not a passive instrument: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' Mary was not only told that God had chosen her for her stupendous function; she also had to accept or reject it. And only when she had uttered her

² *The Mother of God: A Symposium*, p. 40.

Fiat were the third versicle and response fulfilled: 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.' We are, of course, here confronted inescapably with the mystery of the relation between God's foreknowledge and predestination on the one hand and human freedom on the other. The choice of Mary to be the mother of the Incarnate Lord was the culmination of a process of preparation which had been going on ever since man's first fall from grace, and which indeed we may suppose was foreseen by God from the creation of the world. God, foreseeing man would fall, would also prepare for man's redemption; and the long history of the Jewish race was the gradual preparation of a setting in which it would be possible and fitting for the Son of God to become incarnate in human nature in order that the human race might be re-created and renewed.

So the making of Mary is the climax of God's working within the history of the human race. His choice of the Jewish people and the whole great process of the Old Dispensation culminated in the birth of a girl to whom it could be said that God had chosen her to be the mother of his Son. Mary is the climax of God's working within the process of history. To put the matter briefly, we might say that what the 'evolutionary Christologists' taught about our Lord, namely that he is the highest product of God's immanent working in history, is quite true, but that it is not true about him but about his mother. She is, in Wordsworth's words, 'our tainted nature's solitary boast'. We may perhaps think that in defining the Immaculate Conception, the Roman Church was fastening too narrowly upon one particular aspect and element in the whole process, but the dogma at least stresses the fact that God prepared a mother for his Son.³ He did this by his action within the long process of history; and it was inevitably a long process, because throughout it God was working through, and not against, human free will, making use of men's freedom and not overruling it by force. And even when the climax had been reached and Mary was there, the choice was put to her for her to accept

3 Whatever we may think about either the truth or the definability of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, neither of these doctrines removes Mary from the realm of human existence. The former asserts that in her conception she received the grace that we received in baptism; the latter that shortly after death she was raised into the condition in which we shall be at the general resurrection.

or reject.⁴ As I have said above, the great mystery of God's predestination and human freedom faces us here in the bluntest way.

The question naturally comes to our minds, 'Suppose Mary had said "No"?'; and it is the kind of question to which philosophers and theologians have devoted a great deal of attention. It is, however, in no way different from a host of other questions of the same kind. What would have happened if Judas had not betrayed Christ? Or if Peter had not denied him? Or if Pilate had acquitted him? 'The Son of Man goes as it has been told of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.'

Whatever answer we may favour to this wide and general problem, one thing which we can say quite definitely is that, although God works through human beings as his instruments, we can never remove the human responsibility by appealing to the foreknowledge and predestination of God. This is true about the acts for which men are blamed, and about those for which they are praised. It is as true about the acceptance by Mary of her vocation to be the Mother of God, an act for which she deserves praise above that which we give to any other human being, as it is of the act by which Judas betrayed his Master, an act for which he has received lasting shame and disgrace.

So we have the two sides of the medal: on the one hand, the preparation of Mary by God throughout the history of the human race for her stupendous vocation and, on the other hand, Mary's free personal acceptance of that vocation in the words *Ecce ancilla Domini, fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum*. Mary is at the same time the recipient of the greatest dignity to which God has ever exalted a human being and is also, with her Son, the supreme example of human obedience, courage, and fidelity. Therefore, while we glorify God for his wonderful work, we may surely rightly feel towards Mary the most intense human gratitude.

It will be well to say something more about the uniqueness of this process, for it is linked with the great mystery of the Virgin Birth or, as it is more correctly called, the virginal conception of our Lord. What was to take place in his conception

⁴ Cf. J. R. H. Moorman, *The Path to Glory*, p. 10.

made it different from any other conception of a human being. Our Lord was indeed fully and perfectly man, and there is a sense in which we may say that he was more fully and perfectly man than any other man who has ever lived. But in his conception there was not the coming into existence of a new human person who did not previously exist, but the taking of a new human nature, a perfect and complete human nature, by a divine Person who already existed from all eternity. God, without ceasing to be God, was becoming man. And this was quite unlike anything that had ever happened before throughout the history of the human race. It was quite unlike what happened in the conception of Mary, for even if we believe that her conception was immaculate we do not believe that it was virginal. We believe that she had a human father as well as a human mother, whereas her Son had a human mother but no human father. She provided him with his human nature, but not with his existence, for he already existed. It should therefore be clear that the virginal conception of our Lord, the fact that he had a human mother but no human father, is more appropriate to the circumstances and needs of the case, is indeed more 'natural', in the ordinary sense of that word, than would have been a birth from two human parents. It gives him a real and complete human nature, not just a human appearance as the docetic heresy held, but a full and concrete human nature, with body and soul, with flesh and blood, like any other human being. Thus, for example, it is theologically perfectly legitimate that, in discussing the authenticity of the Holy Shroud of Turin, marked as it is with a 'photographic negative' of a human body, one should take account of the physical and chemical changes which any human body would naturally undergo in the particular circumstances to which Christ's body was subjected both in life and in death. Jesus is literally human, and he took his human nature by the physical process of gestation and birth from a human mother. But because, although she gave him his human nature, she did not give him his existence, the virginal conception was thoroughly congruous with the circumstances of the case. It was not a 'stunt', whose purpose was to be striking and startling; it fitted in perfectly with the process that was actually taking place, the incarnation of the Son of God.

Mary's part in our redemption was, as we have seen, thoroughly real and genuine. It was none the less secondary to the part played by God and by Christ. In certain theological circles in recent years the word 'co-redemptrix' has been frequently applied to Mary. It is no doubt open to misunderstanding, but Père René Laurentin has shown⁵ that it has gradually replaced the older term 'redemptrix' precisely in order to avoid the suggestion that Mary's role is on the same level as her Son's. He is *redemptor*, not *co-redemptor*; she is *co-redemptrix*, not *redemptrix*. The force of the prefix *co* is to indicate not equality but subordination, as when St Paul tells his Corinthian disciples that 'we are God's fellow-workers', his *synergoi*, his *co-operators*.⁶ Mary is thus described as co-redemptrix in order to bring out the fact that, while Mary has a real part in the redemptive process, because she is morally and physically associated in it with her Son, yet her part is, and must be, essentially subordinate and ancillary to his.

In all the best Mariological writing of the present day the utmost care has been taken to preserve the unity of the redemptive act, to insist that there are not two acts, one performed by Christ and one by Mary, but one act, whose principal agent is Christ, and in which Mary's part is organically related and subordinated to his. To use a phrase which came recently, I believe, out of the discussions of a group of continental theologians, Mary was redeemed in a special way in the body of the Church and is associated in a special way with the Mediator and so is become the mother of all his members. This seems to me to be an admirably balanced statement. It stresses the fact that Mary herself was redeemed, though redeemed in a special way; as I have said above, she was in the redemptive act from the start. It stresses also the unique relation which she has to the Redeemer. And it locates her not over but within the body of the Church, tracing the Church's basic reality back to the moment when the Divine Word took flesh in Mary's womb. Concerning her motherhood of the Church's members I shall have more to say below.

In the early Church the fact about Mary's part in redemption which seems to have struck the minds of Christians most forcibly was that her obedience reversed the disobedience of Eve. Thus

⁵ *Le Titre de Corédemptrice: Étude historique*. Rome, 1951.

⁶ 1 Cor 3:9.

St Justin Martyr, who died about the year 165, made a very telling use of this notion, when he wrote:

Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled, conceiving the word which was from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death, but the virgin Mary, taking faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel told her the glad tidings, answered 'Be it unto me according to thy word'.⁷

And St Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, who was martyred round the year 200, writes to much the same effect:

Mary the virgin is found obedient, saying, 'Behold thy hand-maid, O Lord, be it unto me according to thy word', but Eve was disobedient, for she did not obey when she was yet a virgin. . . . And thus also it was that the knot of Eve's disobedience was unloosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the virgin Eve had bound fast through unbelief, this did the virgin Mary set free through faith. If the former disobeyed God, yet the latter was persuaded to obey God, in order that the virgin Mary might become the advocate of the virgin Eve. And thus, as the human race fell into bondage to death by reason of a virgin, it was rescued by a virgin, virginal disobedience having been balanced in the opposite scale by virginal obedience.⁸

Mary's *Fiat* was thus the act of human obedience which reversed the whole pattern of human disobedience and so made it possible for God to set in operation his work of re-creating the human race.

One could instance many other illustrations of the way in which Christian writers have expressed the place which our Lady has in the work of redemption. I have, however, space only to refer to two recent theologians of our own Church of England. The first is Sir Edwyn Hoskyns.

In his commentary on St John's Gospel he writes as follows:

At the time of the Lord's death a new family is brought into being. If the unity of the Church is symbolised by the seamless robe, the peculiar nature of that unity is indicated here.⁹ The

⁷ *Tryph.*, c. 100.

⁸ *Contra Haer.*, iii. 22. 4.

⁹ That is, in the third word from the Cross, 'Woman, behold thy son. Behold thy mother.'

Church proceeds from the sacrifice of the Son of God, and the union of the Beloved Disciple and the Mother of the Lord prefigures and foreshadows the charity of the *Ecclesia of God*. Mary, the Mother of the Lord, becomes the mother of the faithful.¹⁰

He goes on to remark that, whereas the other Evangelists describe our Lord's death by the phrase 'He gave up the ghost', St John uses a different word which gives the meaning 'He handed over the Spirit', and he sees this as providing the reason why the First Epistle of St John, in its reference to the 'three who bear record', mentions not only the water and the blood which flowed from the Lord's side, but also the Spirit. And he says:¹¹

If it be assumed that the author intends his readers to suppose that the Beloved Disciple and Mary the Mother of Jesus remain standing beneath the cross, the words *He bowed his head* suggest that he bowed his head towards them, and the words *He handed over the Spirit* are also directed to the faithful believers who stand below.¹²

In another writing Hoskyns comments on our Lord's words at the marriage feast at Cana, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee? Mine hour is not yet come', and says:

Because Mary is the mother of Jesus, she will become the mother of those who believe in him. This second motherhood of Mary is anticipated, whose hour will come when the sacrifice on the cross has been offered. 'Woman' is a far better translation than 'Lady'. When, therefore, the fathers say that Mary is the new Eve, they have caught the meaning of the passage far better than modern commentators; for, while Eve was the mother of a sinful people who ceased to have real contact with God, Mary is the mother of believers, who, redeemed from sin, are reborn and abide with God.

Referring to the passage from Justin, Hoskyns says that there is no reason to suppose that he was the first to make the comparison of Mary with Eve and suggests that the mother of Jesus may have been of far more importance in the primitive Church than modern critics have allowed. He continues:

10 *The Fourth Gospel*, p. 530 (O.U.P.).

11 I Jn 5:8.

12 *Op cit.*, p. 532.

The idea of re-creation and rebirth therefore underlies St John's account of the death on the cross, and Mary herself as the mother of the faithful, shares in this rebirth. If this be accepted we can hardly dismiss as fantastic the allusion implied in the account of the reclining of the head of Jesus in sleep, followed immediately by the rebirth of Mary from his side. The account suggests Genesis 2:21-22 [the birth of Eve from the side of Adam] . . . and Tertullian's comment, *De Anima* 43, represents real insight, 'For as Adam was a figure of Christ, Adam's sleep shadowed out the death of Christ, that from the wound inflicted on his side, might, in like manner [as Eve was formed], be typified the Church, the true mother of the living.'

Hoskyns then refers to that remarkable figure in the twelfth chapter of the Apocalypse, the woman standing on the moon and crowned with the stars, and he insists that this is not, as some have suggested, just a symbolic figure of the Church but is the new Eve, who is in one respect Mary and in another respect the Church: Mary who reversed the disobedience of the first Eve, and the Church which was born from Christ's side on the Cross as Eve was born from the side of the sleeping Adam. And he writes:

The Mother of the Messiah is also the mother of the believers, and is persecuted by the serpent, but in contrast to Eve protects her seed from the serpent's power. The suggestion is that the mother of the Lord and of those who believe in him is the new Eve, still persecuted by the serpent; but, where Eve failed by handing her seed over to death, the new Eve is victorious by bearing children who possess eternal life.¹³

The other modern Anglican to whom I shall refer is R. H. Lightfoot, whom certainly no one ever described as an extreme Anglo-Catholic. His commentary on St John's Gospel was edited after his death by Professor C. F. Evans and was published in 1956. Like Hoskyns, Lightfoot comments on the third word from the Cross; he writes as follows:

Through the destruction of the shrine of his physical life, which he has consecrated and offered for their sakes (17:19-21), a new shrine will arise (2:19), in which a spiritual and true worship

13 'Genesis 1-3 and St John's Gospel', in *J.T.S.*, April 1920, p. 210 f.

will be offered to the Father (4:21-24). In connection with 19:25-27 it was suggested that this new shrine is there set before us in the persons of the Lord's mother and the beloved disciple. Mary, the Lord's physical mother, now becomes, at the Lord's bidding and as a result of his work, the spiritual mother of all those who are or are to be reborn in him, these being represented at the moment by the beloved disciple who with her stands beneath the cross and takes the Lord's place as her son. . . . We are not, it seems, to understand 19:27 as implying that the new son at once takes his new mother away. The hour mentioned is likely to be the hour of the Lord's death, and until this has taken place, and for some time after, they remain at the foot of the cross; and to them primarily when the Lord inclines his head to rest, in the peace of his union with the Father and of his accomplished work, he hands over the new dispensation of Spirit.¹⁴

So on the Cross the Lord commits his mother to St John. Mary and John together are the nucleus of the Christian Church, and she is given to the household of the Church as its mother. To them, that is to say to the Church under the motherhood of Mary, Christ hands over the new dispensation of the Spirit.

Mary's relation to us who are Christ's members is compounded out of her relation to Christ and his relation to us; it is, to use a term of modern logic, the logical product of those two relations. Mary is our mother, because we are members of her son, because we have, not just metaphorically but really, been adopted into him. By our baptism we have been incorporated into the human nature which he took from her and which still continues to exist in its ascended glory. If Christ had ceased to be man at his ascension—and it is to be feared that only too many Christians unreflectively assume that he did—then Mary would have ceased to be his mother, our incorporation into him would be a mere fiction, and so would our relation to her. But the Catholic doctrine of the Incarnation declares that the eternal Son of God, who at one moment in the world's history took human nature in the womb of Blessed Mary, is, in that human nature, man for evermore. And so, as both Hoskyns and Lightfoot saw from their study of St John, Mary is the mother of Jesus and of those who are

¹⁴ *St John's Gospel: A Commentary*, p. 319.

incorporated into him, the mother of the Church which is his Mystical Body and which, because a man and his bride are one flesh, is also Christ's bride.

The Incarnation took place at the Annunciation, when in response to Mary's *Fiat*, the Word was made very man in her womb. But the further fact of her relation to the Church and its members had to wait for the Ascension and for the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost, when the Church, whose archetypal substance already existed in the manhood of Jesus, was fully and visibly constituted in power. In the Ascension the Lord's human nature was withdrawn from human sight and touch. From then until Pentecost the apostolic group was the Church in expectancy and potentiality, awaiting its activation by the Spirit and the communication to it of the full reality of Christ's manhood. When the Spirit descended in tongues of fire, it was to make the waiting group into the mystical Body of Christ in a way analogous to that in which the descent of the Spirit upon Mary at the Annunciation had formed the natural body of Christ in her womb. Nevertheless, although the Mystical Body came into being by this new descent of the Spirit, there was not a new incarnation. Christ was not becoming man a second time, he was not assuming a new human nature; the human nature which he had taken from his mother, in which he had died for our sins and risen again for our justification, was being made present under a new mode. There are not, strictly speaking, two bodies of Christ, a natural and a mystical, but one body of Christ which is manifested in two forms. Nor does the story end here, for that part of the Mystical Body which is on earth needs to be continually nourished and sustained, as Christ's natural body did before its glorification. It is through the Eucharistic Body of the Blessed Sacrament that this takes place. Here again, there is not a new incarnation, but in the Eucharist the human nature which Christ took from his mother is made present in yet another form, a form through which that part of the Mystical Body which is still *in via* on earth is repeatedly sustained and renewed.

In all these modes of manifestation, the human nature of Christ is the human nature which he took from Mary. The descent of the Holy Spirit on Mary at the Annunciation first formed it, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles at

Pentecost released it, so to speak, in the world as the Mystical Body of the Church, and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Eucharistic elements brings it to us as the Sacramental Body. But in all these manifestations and expressions it is one and the same Body, the Body which was formed in Mary's womb, and so when we return from the Altar, having received the Sacramental Body of Christ and having thereby been received more firmly into his Mystical Body, we can say with a new emphasis the words that, in the Genesis story, Adam said after he had tasted the food given him by the first Eve: 'The woman gave me, and I did eat.' For it is the very body, the human nature, which Christ took from his mother, on which we are fed in the Holy Eucharist. And Jesus and his members are one Body, the *Whole Christ*, and Mary is his mother and theirs.

I have quoted already from two almost contemporary Anglican writers; I will conclude with quotations from two of rather earlier date. The first is Alexander Forbes, Bishop of Brechin, a disciple of Dr Pusey and the writer of a celebrated book on the Thirty-nine Articles. He wrote as follows:

Of course, between the perfection of God, and the perfection of the noblest of his creatures, there is the gulph of infinity fixed. . . . But on the other hand, viewed rightly, and in the analogy of faith, the great honour bestowed on Mary, the recognition of her place in the order of grace, tends very directly to a proper estimate of the Glory of God. As in Alpine scenes one can never estimate the vast distances and enormous magnitudes of the glorious objects by which we are surrounded, from the fact that we have no measure or power of comparison till we see some tree or human form, the comparative insignificance of which forms that measure, so it is with the infinitude of God. We ascend towards it through the contemplation of the Saints. Take the Virgin as the highest of them all, estimate her pure as Eve at the moment of her creation, add to that the miraculous fact of Divine Maternity, exhaust all thought and all positive language in the conception and expression of her august prerogatives, and yet, when you have reached the height, God is still infinitely greater. Thus she becomes a height of created nature, whence to rise to the Divine Humanity of her Son, and thence to the infinitude of God, and the higher ideal we have of her, the more complete is our all imperfect estimate of him. Christ is the glorious

sun of righteousness, shining in his strength, glorious and radiant, from whose heat nothing is hidden; and he shines all the more gloriously and radiantly by reason of, and by comparison with, those derived fires, the Saints who shine in the firmament as the stars of heaven, and specially with her whom an imaginative and poetic Christianity, playing upon a fancied interpretation of her lovely name, has designated as '*the Star of the Sea*'.¹⁵

My final quotations are from Dr Pusey himself:

She was Mother of our Redeemer, and so from her, as the fountain of his human birth, came all which he did, and was, and is to us. She, being the mother of him who is our Life, became the Mother of Life; she was *the Gate of Paradise*, because she bore him who restored to us our lost Paradise; she was *the Gate of Heaven*, because he, born of her, opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers; she was *the all undefiled Mother of Holiness*, because the Holy One, born of her, was called the Son of God; she was *the Light-clad Mother of Light*, because he who indwelt her and was born of her, was the True Light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.¹⁶

The love of the Mother and Son were essentially different from all other love, because he was her Son after the flesh, but also Almighty God. And that same love must continue on now, only that the God-enabled power of love in the Beatific vision of his Godhead must be unspeakably intensified.¹⁷

Grand and magnificent and highly endowed as may be any the highest creature which God could create none could have the nearness of her, the Mother of God.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Thirty-nine Articles*, pp. 226, 227.

¹⁶ *Lenten Sermons*, p. 126.

¹⁷ *Eirenicon*, part ii, p. 412.

¹⁸ *Eleven Addresses*, p. 26. I have taken these quotations from *The Blessed Virgin and all the Company of Heaven*, by A. T. Wirgman, p. 104 f.

III

Mary, Scripture, and Tradition

Austin Farrer

THE intention of this essay will be critical rather than purely theological. I do not propose, for the most part, to argue from accepted notions or beliefs; as is done when, presuming a faith in the Incarnation of the Son of God, we ask what such a faith implies, as to the part played by a human parent in the coming-about of such a mystery. I propose instead to ask what evidence we have about Mary, and how the ecclesiastical interpretations of that evidence can (when and if they can) be justified.

When we think of Mary, or of any saint departed this life, we are thinking of an actual citizen of Paradise. So we may be tempted to speculate about the structure of the heavenly kingdom, and of her place in it. The society of heaven is centred on the Heavenly Man, Jesus, in whom, and as who, the Godhead is personally present. Surely his Mother's seat must be next to his throne. Perhaps, if the King of Heaven has a Mother. By an *a priori* speculation on the heavenly kingdom one would not know that he had; or that if he had, she was more specially related to him than his human father. Her heavenly place must be a deduction from what we know of her earthly place in relation to Jesus. So we come down to Mary's history, and our knowledge of her history. Apart from that basis of fact, we have nothing to build upon.

The earliest and most copious of apostolic writers, St Paul, tells us not a word about her history. There is, however, a passage in his Epistle to the Galatians¹ which contains all the essential themes of the doctrine of Virginal Birth. God is our Father, and (though he had placed us under nursery governors and stewards) has now promoted us to the status of free sons. He has done this by adopting us into the condition and

¹ 3:23-4:7.

privileges of his own Son, whom he sent to deliver us through first sharing our bondage—born of a woman, born under the law. By becoming fellow heirs with Christ, we become children of Abraham.

According to this passage, though St Paul uses of his fellow Christians a metaphor which implies that they are naturally sons of God (the Father puts his own children under nursery governors and stewards) he presently takes back the implication: the admission to the status of adult sons is really *an adoption*. So we are the children of our human parents, adopted as sons of God. But this is possible, because Christ, the real Son of God, is sent to share our condition, and to share his with us; the Son of God is born of a human mother. But, by being so born (it appears) he becomes *the* promised Seed of Abraham, and we (by union with him through faith) became seed-of-Abraham too, whether we be Israelites or not.

It follows that Christ has one Mother (a woman), but two Fathers (the descendant of Abraham who directly fathered him, and God). The parts of the divine and human Fathers have somehow to be accommodated to one another. If we read the text as it stands, it appears that God, by sending forth his Son, sprung of a woman, is presenting the family of Abraham with an heir. He cannot do this through the female line, for that way (in Jewish and Biblical thought) no one inherits. It lies very close to the pattern of ideas in this passage, to conclude that as the children of earthly fathers are adopted into God's inheritance, so (reciprocally) the Son of God was adopted into Abraham's. It is of course clear that, from the point of view of human inheritance, Christ is 'seed of Abraham', and so 'of David's seed'. When the Apostle takes his start (as in Galatians he does) from Christ's divine sonship, he thinks of a change in his status which is his being placed in human 'bondage', born of a woman, under the stewardship of the Law. When, as in Romans 1:3, he takes his start from Christ's human condition, as 'a member of the human family of David', he thinks of that change in his status which is his being 'declared Son of God in the realm of Spirit, through the miracle of resurrection': a change which is prototypic of our own adoption, and the breaking of our bondage. The Romans text tells us no more about the way in which God's Son became a member of David's

family than the Galatians text tells us of the way in which he became a member of Abraham's.

It would, indeed, be possible to suppose that the Galatians passage theologizes the story of Bethlehem without detailed historical reference, just as so many other Pauline texts theologize the story of Calvary with the same absence of historical detail. But there are two obvious difficulties in the way of such a supposition. The first is, that St Paul does many times roundly declare that Christ died on the cross, and rose again. He nowhere states that he was born of a virgin. The second difficulty lies in his manner of applying the type of Abraham. According to Galatians, it is an error to think that the blessings attached to Abrahamic inheritance go by mere physical descent. It is no accident that they come through Isaac, who would never have been conceived or born but through the supernatural effect of a divine promise. The mere physical descendants of Abraham, though they may trace their descent from Isaac, have no more right than his descendants through Ishmael's line. The blessings are still attached to the seed of supernatural promise; that is to say, to Christ and to those who, by faith and baptism, have part in him. Now to anyone with the Bethlehem story in his mind, it would seem natural to think of Jesus as the child of promise in the same way as Isaac was, only in a higher degree. But for God's promise to Abraham, Isaac would not have been conceived; nor Jesus, but for his promise to Mary: in the one case, the power of the promise endowing a father with a fertility he had lost; in the other case, dispensing with the action of a father altogether. So far, however, from making this application, St Paul speaks of Christ's being born of a woman at all as a circumstance of bondage, placing him (by condescension) in the Ishmael-condition of Israel-after-the-flesh. That of which Isaac, the 'child of promise', is the type, is a wholly spiritual begetting, by which Christ has his essential being; and into which that fleshly being he took upon him in the family of David is manifestly taken up, when he dies on the cross, and is raised from the dead.

In Romans 4 Abraham, in begetting Isaac according to God's promise, is seen as performing an act typically equivalent to faith in Christ. Once again, a writer with the Bethlehem story in mind might be expected to see faith in the possibility

of Isaac's generation despite parental infertility, as typical of faith in a Christ generated without any human begetter at all. Not so St Paul. The *deadness* of the generative powers in Isaac's parents is for the Apostle typical of the death out of which God raised his Son on Easter morning.

It is fair to conclude that St Paul sees Christ as being made a son of Abraham, by his condescension in being born of a woman into David's family; but sees him revealed as *the* Son of Abraham, the more-than-Isaac, by translation into the spiritual world through resurrection. How Christ became a member of David's family, he does not tell us, except that he was 'born of woman'. If St Paul knew of Christ as virginally conceived, he still did not (it would seem) attach to the virginal conception a positive value as revealing a heavenly Son grafted on earthly stock. What is most obvious about St Paul's argument whether in Galatians or in Romans is the constant concern with the central object of faith. Faith is directed upon the regeneration of man through death and resurrection. If Abraham's faith is typical of saving faith, then it must be typical of *this* faith and of no other. Supposing that the mystery of the virginal birth could have played a positive part in St Paul's argument, it would have been as itself a type and a foreshowing of rebirth from the Easter sepulchre.

The Synoptic Evangelists may be seen as developing the Pauline inheritance in their several ways. St Mark is the most negative of the three. He mentions Mary twice, though he names her only once. His object is to show that the new covenant is not tied within racial or hereditary limits. And this he does, not by exhibiting Christ's strange birth as a breach in physical descent, but by recalling that Christ found the nucleus of his fellowship not in his family at all, but in the apostolic company which he himself created out of such as received his word. After a brief mention of John the Baptist's preaching and Christ's consequent baptism, he associates the beginning of the Ministry with the call of individual disciples. From these and from others Jesus creates the body of the Twelve 'to be with him' and to go on his missions. The immediate sequel is, that Jesus goes home—that is, to his present place of abode at Peter's in Capernaum—but cannot get a meal, because of the people crowding in there to hear him.

Having news of this, his home people—that is, his family from Nazareth—come to fetch him away, saying that he is *distraught*.² (St Mark turns aside here to report how Christ refuted this accusation in the much graver form the Jerusalem rabbis gave it, when they said he was *possessed*.) When it was reported to Jesus that his Mother and his brethren were at the door, calling for him, he cried ‘Who is my mother? Or my brethren? See, my mother and my brethren’—turning his eyes on the circle of his hearers. ‘Whoever does the will of God is my brother or sister or mother.’ The story goes straight on to tell how, in the parable of the Sower, Christ set forth the method by which the New Israel is gathered. The seed is thrown broadcast: those in whom it strikes root, and who persevere, make up the divine harvest. The other seed-parables follow, and an account of three ‘mighty works’ which Jesus did in connection with the journey he made, when he sailed across the lake and back, in the very boat which had been the pulpit of his parable-discourse. Then follows the visit to Christ’s native town, where they could not allow him the honour of a prophet. ‘Is not this the carpenter,’ they said, ‘the son of Mary, the brother of James, Joses, Judah, and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?’ In comment, Jesus said: ‘The only company in which a prophet goes unhonoured is in his native place, his kindred, and his home.’ And leaving Nazareth, he began touring the Galilean villages.

The comment of Jesus appears to associate his family with his townsmen. The family had shown their attitude in their untimely anxiety about his mental and physical health; his townsmen show theirs by doubting if anything much can come of a member in a commonplace local family. St Mark’s account of Christ’s Mother and Brethren is no more and no less unfavourable than his account of the Apostles. The family cannot understand his strange way of living in a new home at Capernaum, which is virtually the first Christian Church. The Twelve, called as his associates in this new pattern of life, cannot understand the entire break with official Israel, which involves his Passion. St Mark knows, but hardly tells us, that

² ἐξέστη. It is impossible to give a precise meaning to this word. It describes any condition, whether trance, strong emotion, madness, or intense preoccupation, which suspends normal attention to present circumstances.

the Apostles returned to their faith and to their obedience after the Resurrection. He must similarly have known that the Family adhered to the Church, for there sat James the Lord's Brother, presiding in the Church at Jerusalem.

St Mark does not trouble to distinguish, as St John later does, between the attitude of Mary, tempted to indiscreet maternal interference, and the attitude of the brethren, at first downright unbelievers in Christ. He shows no sign of attaching a personal value to her function as mother of the Lord; but it is noticeable that he says nothing (according to the text, which is surely correct) of Christ's having a human father. No Christian writer in fact mentions Joseph, who does not also refer to the Virginal Conception. It is easy enough to explain the absence of Joseph's name from Mark 6 by the supposition that he was no longer a familiar figure in Nazareth, having died years ago. But that is hypothesis, and not entirely convincing in view of the Jewish habit of using patronymics. What we should expect would be: 'Is not this Joseph's son? Is not his mother Mary still with us, and his brethren? . . .' Both St Luke and St Matthew in rehandling the episode, mention the Lord's legal father.³

When we come to the Gospel according to St Matthew, we find, of course, an explicit account of the Virginal Conception, but scarcely more personal a valuation of Mary's part. As though taking up St Paul's thoughts in Galatians and Romans, the evangelist begins his gospel with a derivation of Christ from Abraham through David. He gives us a succession of 'correct' fathers, but reminds us how often they obtained their heirs 'incorrectly', by mentioning certain mothers—Tamar from whom Judah got Perez by a sort of incest;⁴ Rahab, a non-Israelite and a harlot from the doomed city of Jericho; Ruth, a Moabitess; Bethsheba, adulterously married by David. The next in series is Joseph: 'Joseph, thou *Son of David*, fear not to take to thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.' The moral is drawn by the first preacher to appear on the scene. 'Begin not to say to yourselves,' says

3 St Matthew's correction is conservative: For 'Is not this the carpenter?' he writes: 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' St Luke says roundly: 'Is not this Joseph's son?'

4 He also mentions Perez's brother Zerah, who should have been the elder twin; but Perez thrust before him (Gen 38).

the Baptist to the orthodox, 'we have Abraham for father. I tell you, of these very stones God can raise up children to Abraham.' There had been much irregular grafting on Abraham's stock, approved by God's election; now there was a supernatural grafting. So plain it is, that the promises do not go by right of natural inheritance, but by the will of God. Christ's wholly supernatural birth cuts off the physical entail, and prepares the way for Gentile Christianity; the Magi come to hail the 'light of the Gentiles'.

Though the mother of Jesus is introduced as the non-bride of Joseph, and as a cause of scandal, it is nevertheless made clear that the scandal is only apparent; her conception is 'by the Holy Ghost'. But St Matthew's readers, recalling the many and various effects attributed in ancient scripture to the Spirit of God, are not to know whether Mary's conceiving is simply 'by divine miracle' or also 'by divine inspiration'. On the second view, something like St Luke's Annunciation Narrative is supposed; on the first, it can be imagined that Mary finds herself inexplicably pregnant, and simply allows herself to be informed and guided by Joseph—an inspired dreamer, like his great namesake. The highest positive value St Matthew visibly assigns to her virginal conceiving is as a predicted sign: 'This whole happening was in fulfilment of the word spoken by the Lord through the prophet, behold a virgin shall conceive. . . .'

In the sequel, St Matthew softens a little the Marcan picture of Christ's family in the time of his ministry; but no more than he softens the picture of Christ's apostles. Christ's comments remain, scarcely modified 'Who is my mother, who my brethren? Behold my mother and my brethren! Whoso doeth the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother. . . .' And again, 'A prophet lacks not honour, save in his country *and in his home*.' He suppresses the indiscretion of the family in coming to fetch him because he is 'distraught' and neglects his food. But by so doing, he leaves the Lord's comments to look causeless, or even harsh. Why, on the mere occasion of his family's desiring to have speech with him, should he say 'Who is my mother? . . .' St Matthew patches the awkwardness by giving the Lord's saying more the air of a universal truth: By doing the will of Christ's heavenly *Father*, all men may become his (spiritual) *brethren*.

Such a rehandling of the Marcan story scarcely allows us to affirm St Matthew's belief in a truly personal participation of Mary in the mystery of Christ's birth: it seems fairest to say that the question did not enter into his views, one way or another. We may think that, holding the secret of her Son's origin, she could have no reserves about accepting his own way of developing his messianic mission. But St Matthew sets before us the example of Peter, blessed for the Father's revelation to him of Christ's divine Sonship⁵ and yet presently rebuked as Satan, for being man-minded, not God-minded, about Christ's passion.

St Luke approached the Gospel-story with a firm grasp on the sequel which would form the subject of his second book. Christ's family joined hands with his apostles in the Church of Pentecost. It was natural that he should cast back for the origins of such a development in Mary's first introduction into the divine history. And so perhaps he sought out, or more seriously valued, what the Lord's brethren had to report as coming from Mary.⁶ We have no means of identifying his sources of information. What we can see, is the strong doctrinal or typological themes which have moulded his narrative.

He too, as befits a good disciple of St Paul, takes up the inheritance of Pauline ideas and begins from Abraham. The miracle of Isaac's birth, which had so much occupied St Paul's attention, is exactly reproduced in the miracle of John Baptist's. But it is immediately made the type, not (as with St Paul) of Christ's resurrection, but of his virginal birth. It is as though the miracle which began the Old Dispensation were brought back on the stage in the ending of it, that it might be presently transcended by the greater miracle which inaugurates the New. By being brought forward into this position, the miracle of Isaac (or rather, of John Baptist) is able to serve as a verifiable sign that the promised miracle of Christ will be fulfilled. Will Mary indeed conceive? Yes: for first, the Holy Ghost will come upon her; second, her cousin Elisabeth is six months gone with child; a fact of which Mary hastens to make herself the personal witness.

⁵ 16:16, cf. 11:27.

⁶ Whatever we may choose piously to think, there is no difficulty whatever in supposing that Mary's story (if she disclosed it) was doubted in the family, until after the Resurrection; especially if Joseph, who might have confirmed it, was dead.

St Luke contrasts Zacharias and Mary, not only in respect of the supernaturality of what is promised them, but also in respect of their degree of faith. There is a close parallelism between the two annunciation-stories. Zacharias's response is, 'By what token am I to know this? I am an old man, and my wife advanced in years.' Mary's is, 'How is this to be? I know not a man.' 'How is this to be?' does not so explicitly ask for confirmation of statement as 'By what token shall I know it?' but the difference is fine and we should not notice it, perhaps, but for the difference in Gabriel's rejoinder on the two occasions. Zacharias is immediately told of the temporary dumbness which would avenge his disbelief; Mary's question is answered in its literal sense: 'How? Why, by the illapse of the Holy Ghost;' Elisabeth's conception being added as a sign of the power of God's word to achieve its own fulfilment. So Mary has the opportunity of a second answer, denied to Zacharias by his dumbness; she makes her submission. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it to me according to thy word.'

While it is true that St Luke allows the merit of Mary's faith to appear, this is by no means the only concern he has on hand, as may be seen by comparing the dovetailed revelations to Zacharias and to Mary with the similarly dovetailed revelations to Saul and to Ananias, to Cornelius and to Peter. The conversion of the Apostle to the Gentiles and the conversion of the first Gentile rest on divine revelations having the same form as the revelation of Christ's birth. Single visions are of no certain authority; independent visions, mutually confirming one another, give assurance. A vision strikes Saul blind, as a vision struck Zacharias dumb. Ananias is vouchsafed a vision, before he knows anything of Saul's, directing him to a line of action which will bring him to the knowledge of Saul's complementary vision. Saul's disbelief in Christ, and Ananias's in the possibility of Saul's true conversion, need both to be overcome. The general pattern of the Cornelius episode is the same, the detailed parallel with the first chapter of the Gospel less close. In fact we may say that the three episodes of double visions are in natural series with one another: the second modelled on the first, and the third on the second. For the Cornelius episode takes up from the Saul episode a feature not found in Luke 1, viz. a Christian brother (Ananias, Peter) to whom the second of the

paired visions is given, and who needs to be convinced of the possibility of the admission of an unlikely convert (the Jewish enemy, the Gentile 'sinner').

These simple reflections on St Luke's narrative-construction may suffice to show us that a main concern of his in the Annunciation story is to show with what objective certainty God has assured Mary (and through her, the Church) of her Son's divine messiahship. It belongs to her position in the double-vision story, that she can be given the effect of the previous vision as a confirmatory sign; it is so also with Ananias. There is no such sign for Zacharias (any more than for Saul) other than the sheer stroke of divine power breaking his resistance.

Nevertheless it is not to be denied that St Luke places Mary's faith in antitype to Abraham's, and Abraham's faith is the type of a faith which justifies. In accordance with this valuation of Mary's part is the attribution to her of a religious thoughtfulness. 'While all who heard wondered at the things told them by the shepherds, Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart;' and much the same is said in conclusion to the Finding of Jesus in the Temple.

The Finding in the Temple is perhaps felt by St Luke to illustrate in a less distressing way than the story in Mark 3 the lesson which Jesus's family had to learn about him. Mary reproaches the twelve-year-old Jesus for causing his parents to search about for him in agony of mind. He replies, 'Why search about for me? Did you not know that I am bound to be among my Father's things?' In similar words, the futility of the search for Jesus in Mark 3:21, 32 might have been rebuked. As he could be nowhere but in the temple at Jerusalem, so he could be nowhere but in Peter's 'church'-house at Capernaum. The action of Mary and Joseph in Luke 2 is more obviously excusable, because Jesus is then only just ceasing to be a Child; and indeed, on his return to Nazareth, he submits to parental authority. However this may be, St Luke follows St Matthew in making the occasion of the saying about Christ's true 'mother and brethren' a mere and unexplained desire on the part of Mary and his kinsmen to see him when crowds stood in the way.⁷ A similar word of the Lord is reported at 11:27-28; 'Nay rather, blessed are they who hear the word of God and

⁷ Lk 8:19-21.

observe it'; this in answer to a woman's cry, 'Blessed the womb that bare thee, and the paps that thou hast sucked!' However much St Luke may desire to write appreciatively of Mary (or of the Apostles), he does nothing to weaken the Lord's own teaching, which separates a saving relation to himself, or to his work, from any question of physical kinship.

For the rest, St Luke records old Symeon's prophecy, that Mary would feel the sword in her heart; he does not mention her in his narrative of the Passion. He tells us that she, and the Lord's brethren, joined the company of the apostles after the Ascension, in prayerful waiting for Pentecost. And that is all.

St John's Gospel adds little that is positive to Mariology. What it does contain is best viewed as a balanced reflection on the previous tradition, a sort of synthesis of St Paul, St Luke, and St Mark. This Gospel follows Marcan form in concentrating on the Ministry and Passion, with John Baptist's preaching as the first historical episode. The first mention of the Baptist is embedded, however, in a theological preface, which describes the Incarnation of the Word in a manner most naturally taken to imply a knowledge of Christ's virginal conception, and to interpret what is physically true of Christ as being mystically true of Christians. Those who believe in his name receive the right to be called Sons of God—'they who were begotten not of blood, nor of the will of flesh, nor of the will of a man (husband), but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' In 6:42 St John repeats the 'synoptic' objection to Christ's claims, 'Is not this the Son of Joseph?' He gives it fresh point by relating it to Christ's declaration that he is a 'bread' descending from heaven. St John's text is most easily interpreted as 'tragic irony'; he and his readers know how Christ's 'descent from heaven' was made compatible with the legal paternity of Joseph.⁸ The discourse with Nicodemus takes up the theme of a Christian's supernatural birth, through the Spirit. The thought of Christ's conception by the Holy Ghost may supply the background, but the discourse leads us in a Pauline direction; it goes on to link the regeneration of man with Christ's death and resurrection.⁹

⁸ There is a further point of irony, however. What can be more appropriate to a son of *Joseph* than to feed a starving world with bread?

⁹ 3:14.

The episode of Cana¹⁰ contains, among many other themes, St John's picture of Mary learning not to rule her Son, but to be ruled by him. The behaviour of the Lord's brethren in 7:3 ff. is presented in conscious contrast. Both the Mother in 2 and the Brethren in 7 move Jesus to act in advance of the 'hour' or the 'moment' marked by the divine will. But whereas the Brethren are said to be, and are left, in a state of disbelief, the Lord's Mother accepts correction. The advice she gives the servants can be compared with her submission to Gabriel, according to St Luke. 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.'—'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.' Her previous remark, 'They have no wine' may be similarly compared with 'I know not a man'. Each saying presents the difficulty which lies in a lack of physical means.

The mention of Mary's presence at the crucifixion does justice to Symeon's prophecy of the sword in her heart, according to St Luke. The dying Christ's action in willing Mary to his beloved disciple, and the disciple to Mary, shows how the Passion and its sequel brought Mary into fellowship with the apostolic group, where we find her immediately after the Ascension according to Acts 1:14.

We have summarized the evidence. What are we to say of it? The best-attested fact about Mary is that she remained outside the action of Christ's mission; and that she made common cause with his family in trying to bring him back home, if only for rest and refreshment. St Luke's statement that she was in the Church after the Resurrection is almost equally well founded, in view of independent evidence about the early adherence of the Family.¹¹ In judging the bearing of these facts, we have to remember the dependent position of a Jewish woman at that time. Jesus has left home; Mary remains one of the family, and very likely is their housekeeper.

The Virginal Conception rests on the testimony of St Matthew and St Luke, perhaps of St John. It is obvious, from what we have written, that a critic uninfluenced by motives of faith is free to conclude that the belief grew out of doctrinal considerations, of which the seeds can be found already in St Paul. The Church, that is, judged Christ to have been vir-

¹⁰ 2:1-11.

¹¹ I Cor 15:7, 9:5, Gal 2:9.

ginally conceived because they thought he must have been, not because they had evidence that he was. The late appearance of the story—say eighty years after the alleged event—will be cited as negative evidence; and though, on the orthodox hypothesis, explanations for the lateness of the written testimony can be found, they cannot give the hypothesis itself the support which early evidence could give. The evidence for any active or spiritual participation of Mary in the acceptance of her virginal motherhood lies in St Luke alone. A critic who will go no further, but only so far as to allow a simple genuine tradition of Mary's virginity, variously overlaid by St Matthew and St Luke with typological decoration, will have no *historical* ground whatever for the Catholic valuation of Mary's sanctity.

The most believing of us cannot fail to mark a notable difference between the evidence for the Virginal Conception of Christ, and the evidence for his Resurrection. Whatever attempt we make to find coherent sense in the events following the Crucifixion and issuing in the emergence of the Church, we shall admit that something strange and powerful happened to the disciples, to make them proclaim Christ risen from the dead. Because we share their faith and are touched by their inspiration, we accept their account of the fundamental nature of their experiences. But if we did not, we should still give some account of it, though it was no more than to say that they suffered vivid hallucinations; or that they took a man who had recovered from his injuries for a man who had conquered his death; or that they mistook our man for another. Whereas in the case of the Virginal Conception, there will, on the infidel hypothesis, be nothing that requires explanation of any kind. How did Mary come to conceive? St Matthew is at pains to explain to us why St Joseph had not taken her to wife. All the infidel need do is dispense with St Matthew's explanations.

How different, again, in the two cases, is the time interval between fact and testimony to fact! St Paul, the preacher of the Resurrection, is converted to a Church already proclaiming it, within some three years of the event. St Matthew's infancy narrative may be eighty years after the nativity. It is perfectly easy to explain the late appearance of familiarity with the facts of Christ's birth, if we first make the hypothesis that the facts were as our Evangelists report them. But such an explanation

merely removes a difficulty; it does nothing to establish the hypothesis.

Well, but the Church received the gospels of St Matthew and St Luke with all acceptance; and before any creed was formulated the Virginal Conception had the virtual status of a credal belief. The fact on which our faith reposes is not the fact of Christ's history alone, it is the double fact of that history taken together with the existence of the Spirit-filled Church, which proclaimed that history and lived by its fruits. And the Church accepted the Virginal Conception as a harmonious part of the sacred story; once it had been set forth, it could not be thought away; it belonged so absolutely in its place. Inspired authority established the belief; Ignatius and Irenaeus make it a kernel of orthodoxy.

There is much matter for reflection here. What limits shall we set to the Church's function of inspired teaching? She is inspired to proclaim facts, and to interpret facts; but not to create facts: nothing can create a fact, but its occurrence. A fact created by a subsequent declaration about it is false, by definition. (True facts of a sort can be created by declaration: for example, you declare me your deputy, and I am. But this sort of fact-creation has obviously no bearing on the case.)

It is too simple, however, to say that facts are first acknowledged, then interpreted. The whole of philosophical wisdom is opposed to so black-and-white a distinction. Facts, in their objective existence, are just occurrences; and occurrences occur, whatever we think or do not think. But no fact enters into human reckoning without receiving some initial interpretation from us, however immediate, however instinctive. And in cases where occurrence of the fact is open to doubt, our belief or disbelief will be conditioned by our ability or our willingness to interpret. You tell me that, passing a certain field in the dark, you saw an elephant at some distance. I can interpret the presence of the elephant, if I *know* that a circus-menagerie is camping there; I may be *willing* so to interpret the elephant's presence, by supposing something of the sort, out of deference to your accuracy of observation, though I have no such knowledge. If I have no such knowledge, and no such willingness, I suppose you to have been mistaken. There was no elephant.

Now the Christian mind approaches historical evidence with what it takes to be a certain knowledge, and also with a certain willingness; and both are relevant to the interpretation of that evidence. What we take to be our knowledge, is of God's dealings with mankind, whether in ancient Israel or in modern Christendom. This gives us a basis for interpreting events as divine interpositions, and for judging in which direction such interpositions point. And faith is a willingness to trust God's (seeming) actions in the Christian dispensation, and to take them for what they seem to be. Those who lack the knowledge of religious instruction, or the willingness of faith, will disbelieve the account of a divine interposition, suddenly thrown at them without context. So no one can fail to see that interpretation not only values facts once acknowledged; it also contributes to making them acknowledged as facts. All this is mere commonplace; but when we come to theology, or rather, to sacred history, we touch upon a subtler point. The fact of sacred history receives not one interpretation, but two interpretations on two different levels. Physically speaking, Mary conceives unaided, as happens often in the females of certain lower species; perhaps we should add that in her case the event is psychologically conditioned; a vision convinces her of her power so to conceive, before she does. Theologically speaking, her conception is a special act of God, whereby the divine Son makes a beginning of incarnate existence. The subtle question is, how the physical and the theological interpretations of the event are, or ought to be, related. We may state three possible positions.

First, it may be held that no physical fact can be established except through a physical, or at least a natural, interpretation. That is to say, I can only accept the virginal conception of Christ, if I have physical, or psychophysical knowledge encouraging me to interpret the literary evidence as historical fact; or at least a willingness to stretch whatever physical analogy there is, to cover such a case. On this view, theology can only come in afterwards, when the physical question has been settled on its merits. Only then is theology free to consider how the physical fact is related to the will and act of God.

Second, it may be held that theological interpretation will suffice alone, in the entire absence of physical interpretation.

Suppose, that is, that we can offer no natural interpretation whatever of Mary's conceiving; we may be content to be ignorant, so long as it seems in the line of God's saving purposes that she should conceive without a male partner. The context, that is, which makes the physical event credible need not be a physical context at all, but the context of God's dealings with his people.

A third position would be that of compromise between the first two. Theological interpretation will not suffice, there must be some degree of natural interpretation. Nevertheless, the two can act together in making the alleged physical fact acceptable. This will mean in practice that the physical interpretation fails to decide us for belief; the theological interpretation turns the scale.

If we look at these three positions, we shall perhaps be likely to agree that they reduce to two; for there is no practical difference between the second and the third. Every physical event must receive *some* degree of natural interpretation, must be fitted into the continuous context of natural happenings, or it simply would not have the value to us of a physical event at all. We shall at least suppose that conception and embryonic growth proceed in the production of the Christ-child as they do in that of other children. Even for the unique beginning of the process, St Luke suggests natural analogies. John Baptist's conception suggests that Christ's is something like the case of a child produced by old parents, through a surprising spurt of vitality, when they seemed to have lost the power. Here at least is analogy for conception taking place outside the scope of the usual rules. Again, the attribution of the effect to the action of the Holy Spirit, and its connection with Mary's vision, tacitly invokes the analogy of people acquiring or revealing physical powers they did not appear to possess, under the influence of 'inspiration'—which, on its psychological side, is perceptible as strong religious emotion or conviction. Nevertheless, it is evident that the decisive interpretative context for St Luke, and that which makes the event credible to him, is the context of God's ways with Israel, his continued action in Christ, and his action through the Spirit in the Church.

We are left, then, with two positions to consider. According to the first no physical event can be accepted as credible except

by a stern application of physical or at least natural criteria: theological or supernatural interpretation cannot be applied except to an independently established natural belief. According to the second, we may accept as Christians what as mere naturalists we might reject.

The way to argue for the first position is to show what a flood-gate to superstition will be opened if we once depart from it. The way to argue for the second is to point out that an interpretation of Christianity in terms of the first is totally unreal. The whole supernatural story of the Gospel never was believed on natural evidence; it was accepted by men who, catching the apostolic preacher's attitude, believed that God had come to them, and had shaped natural facts in such fashion as his merciful purpose required. And the way for the upholders of the second position to meet the 'floodgates' argument is to point out that there is such a thing as Christian commonsense, and that it operates in perfectly describable ways. The Christian mind may have a normal defence-mechanism against the supernatural, such as not to give way except under overwhelming pressures.

Without going further into the argument, we may venture to conclude that any Christianity other than the most radical and iconoclastic modernism must be committed to the second position. If, then, it is the function of the Paraclete in the apostolic Church to interpret the facts of the Gospel, by however theological or supernatural an interpretation, it is on that very account his function to make credible and accepted the Gospel facts themselves, even the physical facts. And the extreme case of a fact made credible in this way is the fact of Christ's virginal conception; for not only is the fact physically improbable, the evidence for it lies in testimonies both late and (though capable of harmonization) not *prima facie* harmonious.

Nevertheless, the post-apostolic Church accepted the testimony, and put the fact in the Creed—Conceived by Holy Ghost, born of Mary in her virginity. If we say that the Church or her hierarchy was *inspired* to acknowledge the virginity of Mary, by using that word we do not excuse ourselves from logical considerations. What the Paraclete inspires is an activity of feeling, thinking, or judging; he sustains it, and sends it divinely right. The inspired process of mind, being itself

human, should be either visible or inferable, and its divine rightness should be appreciable, anyhow after the event. What sort of right-judging, then, did the inspired Church do? Surely, in this case, it was not so much that she judged the testimony to rest on sound historical evidences, as that she judged the fact testified to be absolutely fitting, and therefore presumed the soundness of the testimony. That is, the Church accepted on other grounds the Resurrection, Eternal Kingdom, and Divine Sonship of Jesus; and when told by the First and Third evangelists that he came into the world by virginal conception, she said 'Yes, that is how he came into the world; how else?' It was thus that the general credit due to these evangelists' histories was readily extended to cover their infancy narratives. Such men would not write carelessly about so important a point; and there was no reason to think they had done so, for the testimony they bore was worthy of God and of his Christ.

'It was fitting, and so it was the fact'; *deuit, ergo factum est*. Put like that, the formula awakens the deepest misgivings. Surely the human mind, assisted or unassisted by the Spirit of God, does not validly infer from theological fittingness to fact of history. What God does is not what we expect; it is paradoxical, surprising to us; only after the event are we inspired to see that it was divinely best. If we trust our inspirations about what God must have done, we shall err with Peter, when he judged that God *could not have* destined his Son to suffer. So long as Peter confined himself to putting a value on what God had visibly done, in Jesus's ministry and mighty works, his inspiration took him right. This was the Christ; flesh and blood had not revealed it to him, but the Father in Heaven. He began to speculate, and he was lost.

The objection is just. But in fact the formula is ambiguous. 'It is fitting, and so it was the fact' may be acceptable or unacceptable, according to the sort of thing that 'It' stands for. 'It' may be 'our conjecture' or it may be 'these men's professedly historical account'. If the first, then the formula is unacceptable. If the second, it is acceptable. For it is commonly through someone's testimony that we are informed of those paradoxically right acts of God, which we see to be fitting, once we have digested our surprise. (St Matthew insists on the

paradox, or scandal, of the Virgin Birth itself. It involved a domestic disgrace, and it meant that the destined Son of David had not a drop of David's blood.)

Thus, though a pure historian might judge the literary testimony for Christ's Virginal Conception to be weak, or indecisive, it is essential that there should be such testimony, and that it should be at least open to us to view it as resting on a real tradition. Christ was first known in his manhood, and preached as risen and ascended; the Gospel story took form, from the known facts, and found its beginning in the prophesying of John Baptist. The Palestinian Church (we can suppose if we wish) became presently acquainted also with family traditions about Jesus's wonderful birth, but even then it was some while before the set form of Gospel story was stretched to include them. Were it, on the other hand, impossible to see by what genuine channels our evangelists could have received their story; were the silence of St Mark and St Paul decisive, then we should be in the greatest difficulty about admitting that the post-apostolic church was truly inspired to make the Virginal Conception into a credal belief. As it is, there is a *datum* for the Spirit to interpret; and in confirming the belief, he leads us to give a favourable account of the transmission of the tradition to our evangelists.

We have said that revelation is effected by the concordant testimony of Gospel fact, and inspired Church; and where, as in the case before us, belief must lean so heavily on the side of the Paraclete, our sense of dependence on the Church must be proportionately greater. I myself, let me hope, enter into the credal faith and appreciate the divine rightness, and heavenly meaning of the Virginal Birth. Yet I would not trust my judgement unaided in such a matter. I should scarcely come to the decision of positive belief, but for the massive consent of the primitive Church and of so many subsequent Catholic ages, confirmed by authoritative declarations, themselves in turn confirmed by Catholic consent.

Having defined the position we wish to commend, we may look briefly at tenets which lie to the left and to the right of it. On the one hand we have the man who, however willing to accept the Church's interpretative authority, cannot persuade himself that the historical evidence really amounts to anything at all,

and concludes that as there is nothing there for the Church to interpret, there is no fact for him to believe. On the other hand we have the position of the Roman Church, which, on the face of it at least, appears to claim for authoritative interpretation the power to establish facts which are vouched for by no historical testimony at all.

To take the former case first. We confine ourselves to the man who is in other respects orthodox and whose disbelief in Christ's virginal birth is simply forced on him by what he judges to be the inadmissability of the historical evidence. (His is the interesting case. Who does not know that there are negative heretics in all degrees, maintaining the name of Christian, and, indeed, true lovers of Christ?) His orthodoxy, then, will incline him to accept the inspired guidance of the ancient and universal Church in a matter of credal belief. The Church was inspired to think rightly and Christianly about the evidence before her, so far as the common science of the time enabled her to understand it. What inspiration did not do, was to equip her with an art of historical criticism, and a science of natural fact, which have been the lesson to mankind of more recent centuries. And so, in matter of fact, she erred. What value, then, can be attached to that inspiration, which enabled her to theologize correctly over evidence which our orthodox modernist judges to have been unsound?

He will observe how the Fathers reasoned. The conception of Christ by the Virgin was taken as evidence of a double truth. Christ was both Divine Son, and a real member of the human race. Our orthodox modernist agrees; and he accepts the infancy-narratives as symbolical stories, or myths, enshrining and protecting these truths for an age which, perhaps, could not have grasped them otherwise. For himself, he is able to believe that the Eternally Begotten Son of God took flesh of man from two human parents, not from one only.

Shall we say that the man is fundamentally orthodox in intention if he can say *Decuisset, si factum esset*, 'It would have been fitting, had it been the fact', and really heretical if he says, *Nec factum est, nec factum decuisset*, 'It neither happened in fact, nor was it fitting it should'? No, we can scarcely distinguish in such terms as these. For it cannot be orthodox to say that it would have been fitting for God to have done otherwise than

he did; there cannot have been a better way for him to enter into our condition, than that which he chose (whatever it was). Indeed we may be sure that our orthodox modernists will feel that a completely natural fashion of birth most perfectly secures and expresses the entirety of Christ's manhood; a virginal birth would, in the long run, set him too much apart from us. In the short run, however, he may allow that it was otherwise. It would not have been fitting for Christ to have been virginally conceived, but it was fitting that the primitive Church should have projected her understanding of his divine humanity in mythic terms, the only terms, perhaps, in which she could have grasped the fundamental truth of his Person. By contrast it will be fundamentally heretical to say that the Church was misguided to formulate the credal belief, because, *in the terms of that day*, it was theologically misleading, and indeed more so than a denial of the virginal conception would have been.

One cannot but sympathize with the modernist *malgré lui*, whom plain honesty of mind, and historical conscience, cuts off from fullness of communion with the Church's credal faith. He loses the dearest of saints from his calendar. For, apart from the drama of Christ's conception, birth, and childhood, there is nothing to give any features to the mother of Christ.

We will turn now to the opposite case. Romanists appear to us to accept traditions about Mary, supported at certain points by an ecclesiastical authority claimed as infallible; but for which no historical testimony in the ordinary sense can be found. On the face of it, the acceptance of such traditions requires some justification and it may be of interest barely to list several positions that might be taken.

First, it might be said that in so far as the approved mariological traditions state facts about Mary's historical existence, they must have obtained credence on historical evidence, after all. There really was an oral tradition extending in unbroken and unperverted continuity from apostolic times to the Dark Ages, though it was only in the Dark Ages that these matters came to light. The subsequent massive acceptance of the traditions in the Church, confirmed by the seal of papal authority, is sufficient to assure the Catholic believer that the chain of historical testimony, though now perfectly invisible, was sound in every link.

What this amounts to is the extension of the *decurt ergo factum* argument from the history of the thing believed, to the evidence for the belief. Not only must it have happened; there must also have been a chain of testimony, to tell us that it did. The principle of argument is surely vicious; but that is not the worst of it. The allegation about the chain of testimony is liable to collide with historical probability at any point. We may have to admit that the vocal part of Christendom at any given period was not only silent as to the alleged belief, but talked as though they believed otherwise.

A second position possible is to admit that there is no distinct testimony to matter-of-fact other than that contained in Scripture itself, or in other genuinely historical sources; and to claim that the substance of the tradition you defend is reasonably educible from the known historical evidence. All, in fact, that the Church has been inspired to do is to draw out or interpret the sense. (We say that the *substance* of the traditions is educible from the evidence. Of course we shall have to admit the currency of pious legends, embodying truth in tales.)

This line of defence is sound in itself, if only it will stretch to cover the case. Its applicability is likely to depend very much on the view you take of biblical inspiration. Was St Luke guided to record inerrantly the very words Gabriel spoke, as it were out of the mouth of God? And was St Jerome guided to give a Latin translation valid in itself? '*Ave, plena gratia!*' It has been divinely said, then, that Mary has fullness of Grace; and so the whole theology of Grace as worked out from Augustine to Aquinas may be brought to bear, and we may boldly describe Mary's existence from the moment of her conception as one from which no grace was withheld, which God and the Schoolmen know how to give. But if we feel obliged to fall back on St Luke's Greek, we find this charming play on words, χαῖρε κεχαριτωμένη (a word-play, because χάρις and χαρά are different notions). Puns cannot be translated: 'Good day to you, since God's so good to you!' gives the general effect. The suggestion is that a newly granted favour from heaven makes her day, or, to stick to the Greek, gives her reason to be glad. What the angel brings is news. So Mary is dumbfounded, and wonders what the news is.

But perhaps Gabriel did not speak in Greek either;¹² and perhaps the most we have the right to expect of St Luke is that he should express in good old biblical style and image what St James said Mary had said about an overwhelming experience.

Tacitly yielding to such modern considerations as these, the Catholic theologian will no longer rely on possessing a divine utterance which virtually informs him that Mary was conceived immaculate. Her having been so conceived must be made to depend on what is presupposed in her playing the part that she does. But no sooner is this said, than the logic of the case is altered. The eduction of implications from (guaranteed) statements is one thing; the inference to antecedents from the occurrence of events is another. And the possibility of doing it with any confidence is in direct proportion to the commonplaceness of the event. 'Kettles never boil, unless they have been heated.'—'A man never writes a poem of outstanding merit, unless he has . . .' Well, unless he has *what*? And the composition of poetical masterpieces is itself a commonplace event, compared with that of experiencing and accepting a call to become virgin mother of the Son of God.

If God has not (implicitly) told us that Mary was conceived immaculate, then it seems that we are involved in the presumption of inferring from one unique divine act another unique divine act. 'It was fitting that the God who did thus should also have done thus, and so no doubt he did:' *Decuit, ergo factum est*. If such reasoning is vicious, it will not have been divinely supported, or inspired; and if Catholics in the mass have thought thus, it reveals a common infirmity of the human mind. The difficulty is not met by pointing out that such events as the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption (anyhow in the most refined and theologized version of that mystery) are by their nature invisible happenings, and therefore no parts of the history for which historical testimony is either demanded or forthcoming. For it does not lessen the presumption of inferring what God must have done, that there is not merely no evidence that he did it, but no possibility even, that there should be any. It is not a less impertinence to tell a man what he says to himself in solitude, than to give him an unevidenced

¹² In Semitic speech, he would need a pun: 'Peace, daughter of peace!' would do it.

account of what he must have said in the market-place. God's invisible acts are only known if he reveals them in perceptible effects.

I incline to judge that the best defence for the believer in the papal dogmas is a counter-attack against the absoluteness of the canon we have just laid down. It is presumption to argue *deciuit, ergo factum* of the ways of God. Nevertheless no one can think of the continuous action of God through a whole train of events without filling in a few gaps in the evidence. We cannot argue 'This is the *proper* thing for God to have done, so he did it.' But we cannot help supposing that the path of God's will from one revealed action to another, when the two are in series, was continuous; nor can we withhold ourselves from conceiving the bridge, or transition, between the two. And the Church, we might hold, has been supported and directed by the divine Spirit, in thinking such transitions.

The defence may be allowed in general. It might apply to the transition between the death on the cross and the resurrection. 'He descended into hades'; the transition was through the state of being dead, Christ touched the bottom of our condition. The fact was not visible; the Church learned to think it. If the transition from God's dealing with old Israel to the Incarnation of the Word could be charted with the same sort of reason as passing through the Immaculate Conception, I might believe that the Church had been guided to think so. And, presumably, if I were a willing subject of the Pope, I should take it on his authority that such a charting of the divine path was reasonably and Christianly drawn.

However that may be, devotion to Mary does not need such extraordinary justifications. If she is loved, it is because she is; she has her place in the Body of Christ and it is a place no other creature can share. Christ is worshipped for what he uniquely is in each of his sainted members; the relation of Mary to Jesus is an endless subject of fruitful contemplation, and her will is a handle to take hold of the will of God. Her glory is that she is the Virgin Mother of God; what more can be added to it?

Mary appears in scripture as a glorified figure only in the vision of the Apocalypse,¹³ and the reference of even this

passage to Mary has been disputed: mistakenly, indeed. How could St John write of a new Eve who bears the Messiah to crush the old Serpent, without even thinking of Mary? Still, the figure is not primarily the figure of Mary nor, indeed, of a *new* Eve. It is the figure of Eve, that is, of woman, attaining the fulfilment of the promise implicit in the curse laid upon her in Eden. In one sense of the promise and the curse, woman (let us say, Eve) has always been bringing forth her children in sorrow, and they have always been at odds with the Serpent. But in another sense, her travail is fruitless until she brings forth the man-child who bruises the Serpent's head; and this she does in the person of the ecclesia of God and, more narrowly, in the person of Mary. Even this account is simpler than St John's picture; for what he sees is not just the literal birth of the earthly Christ at Bethlehem, but the birth of the heavenly Man who now reigns, and will come to judge. The event of the heavenly Man's birth is in fact earthly, for he is threatened by the Serpent and needs to be caught up into the Throne by his ascension, before the failure of the Serpent's lying-in-wait becomes evident. Yet since it is the birth of the heavenly Man, rather than the Incarnation of the Son of God, that St John sees, it has all the dignity of a heavenly birth, and the Mother becomes a heavenly figure.

What sort of glorification of Mary is involved in this picture? The ecclesia of God is glorified, or celestialized, by association with the heavenly Man she is privileged to bring forth; and this she does in Mary. It is through the person of Mary that she becomes the Mother of Christ. But only in the moment of the birth. When St John goes on to recount the Woman's further history, her flight from the Serpent and the persecution of 'the rest of her seed' by the Serpent's seed (Antichrist), we have no right to suppose that he is thinking of Mary, or making her the Mother of Christians, or the mystical substance of the Church. For the figure of the vision is Eve, not Mary; she does her child-bearing at Bethlehem in her Mary-phase, she travails in the sorrow of Christ's disciples¹⁴ over his 'birth' from the Easter Sepulchre into the light of heaven; she bears her other children, the brethren of Messiah, in her role of Ecclesia.

Mary, then, according to this Vision, is not seen as the

¹⁴ Says St John's Gospel, 16:20-22.

foundation-member, or archetype, or universal matrix of the Church. The relation is exactly opposite: the Church comes first: that is, the people of God, under the womanly guise of mother to the children of God. Mary is glorified by being taken up into this function in a unique way; she is the embodiment of the Community in the physical bearing of *the* Child of God, the fruit of all Eve's travail.

IV

Our Lady in Seventeenth-century Anglican Devotion and Theology

A. M. Allchin

BEFORE entering upon this subject, it might be as well to ask what is the value and importance of an enquiry into the views of the Anglican writers of the seventeenth century. Very different answers could be given to this question. For some, the Caroline divines have become an almost infallible authority, who indicate for us how far we must go, and how far we must not go in all matters of belief and practice. Others, in reaction against this attitude, tend to regard them as largely irrelevant, and to appeal either to the Continental Reformers and their English contemporaries, or to the tradition of the medieval Western Church, over the heads, so to speak, of our seventeenth-century predecessors. The very fact of undertaking a study of the subject shows that one does not share the latter view. The position of the seventeenth-century Anglican theologians is, and in the opinion of the present writer must remain, of a real importance for all Anglican theological thinking. But this emphatically does not mean that we have to follow them in every particular, nor that we are limited by their positions and conclusions. What it does mean is that we may find in them certain attitudes, certain approaches to theological problems, which are still valid for Anglican thinking to-day and, we would dare to say, still of value for Christian thinking as a whole. By their constant appeal to 'the Scriptures interpreted by the perpetual practice of God's Church', to use the words of Herbert Thorndike, they provide us with a method and a starting point for our own researches. But they do not give us a complete and finished system.

In this essay, therefore, no attempt will be made to construct

a complete seventeenth-century Anglican Mariology, by means of accumulating a catena of proof-texts, an attempt which would be as misleading as it would be impossible of accomplishment. Rather, we shall examine a number of representative writers, try to see how their position relates to those both on the left and on the right of them, and to understand what they have to tell us, about their attitude to her, whom all generations are to call blessed.

I

Her virgin-eyes saw God Incarnate born
 When she to Bethlehem came that happy morn
 How high her raptures then began to swell,
 None but her own omniscient Son can tell;
 As Eve when she her fontal sin review'd,
 Wept for herself, and all she should include;
 Bless'd Mary, with man's Saviour in embrace,
 Joy'd for herself, and for all human race;
 All Saints are by her Son's dear influence bless'd,
 She kept the very fountain at her breast;
 The Son adored and nursed by the sweet Maid,
 A thousand-fold of love for love repaid;
 Heaven with transcendent joys her entrance graced,
 Next to His throne her Son His Mother placed;
 And here below, now she's of Heaven possessed
 All generations are to call her blessed.

These lines, of Bishop Thomas Ken (1637-1711), have become well known among Anglicans by being included in the *English Hymnal* (No. 217), and many who have read or sung them must have wondered whether they were in any way representative of the thought and piety of their time, or whether they were a solitary aberration of Marian devotion on the part of a single High-Church bishop. The question would have been sharpened, were it widely known that the lines quoted are only part of a much longer poem, that for the First Sunday after Epiphany in Ken's *Christian Year*, which recounts the whole traditional story of the Virgin's life, and includes an assertion of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, no less positive than that of the Assumption at the end.

The Holy Ghost His temple in her built,
 Cleansed from congenial, kept from mortal guilt,
 And from the moment that her blood was fired,
 Into her heart Celestial Love inspired.¹

For everyone knows, or thinks he knows, that whereas the Church of the Counter-Reformation continued and developed the devotion and doctrine of the Middle Ages with regard to Mary, the Churches of the Reformation, the Church of England among them, completely broke with it.

We must ask ourselves, how great was this break, and what was its nature and motivation? The results may be surprising. That there was a very great break in devotional practice in the sixteenth century it would be ridiculous to deny. Walsingham, one of the greatest shrines of medieval England, totally destroyed, countless statues and holy places connected with our Lady taken away, almost the whole liturgical veneration of Mary removed from the Prayer Book, invocation totally forbidden, all this is undeniable; and what is more, although they may have deplored the excesses of the movement, the writers of the seventeenth century did not substantially challenge it. It must be emphasized that this was a break in popular devotion, and a protest against certain forms of popular religion. It was not first and foremost an alteration of doctrine. But none the less it was thorough and sudden.

It would be wearisome to quote at length the many passages of the seventeenth-century writers in which they attack the practice of the Roman Catholic Church in this matter. What is the heart of their protest? It may be summed up in three points.

(1) They saw a danger that we should give the glory which is due to God, to her, that we should worship and serve the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.² In the words of Bishop John Pearson's (1612-1686) classical commentary on the creed: 'We cannot bear too reverend a regard unto the Mother of our Lord, so long as we give her not that worship which is due unto the Lord himself. Let us keep the language of the Primitive Church. Let her be honoured and

¹ For the text of the whole poem see *Bishop Ken's Christian Year* (London 1868), pp. 58-64.

² Rom 1:25.

esteemed, let Him be worshipped and adored.’³ And Mark Frank, Master of Pembroke College, Cambridge (1613–1664), and as we shall see, one of the most positive of the seventeenth-century theologians in his teaching on this subject, says on this theme,

From Christ’s being with her and with us, it is that we are blessed. From his Incarnation begins the date of all our happiness. If God be not with us, all the world can not make us happy much less blessed. From this grace of his Incarnation first riseth all our glory; so that ‘Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give the praise’ must she sing as well as we; and they do her wrong as well as God, that give his glory unto her, who will not give his glory to another, though to his mother, because she is but his earthly mother—a thing infinitely distant from the heavenly Father. Nor would that humble handmaid, if she should understand the vain and fond, and almost idolatrous styles and honours that are given her somewhere upon earth, be pleased with them; she is highly favoured enough that her Lord and Son is with her, and she with him; she would be no higher sharer.⁴

There is here an evident difference with the tradition of the Eastern Church, in which ἡ θεοπρεπής δόξα, the glory which befits God, is explicitly attributed to Mary. But this difference is only one facet of the wholly different language about redemption, and about the way in which the divine life is communicated to man implied in the Eastern use of the term θεόσις, deification. In the context of a view of redemption which speaks of God becoming man, that man might become God by grace, the extreme language of glorification used about the Mother of God has an appropriate place; and granted the necessary safeguards and reservations which the Fathers themselves make about the language of deification (for instance in the distinction made by some writers between the divine essence and energies) may be unexceptionable. But out of that context, it can sometimes take on an almost pagan sound. It was perhaps the fact that in the Western Middle Ages thought about and, still more, devotion to our Lady had become divorced from its

3 J. Pearson, *Exposition of the Creed*. Ed. Oxford, 1864, p. 321.

4 Mark Frank, *Sermons*, Vol. II. 1849, pp. 48–49, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology.

full doctrinal setting, which made expressions innocent in themselves appear idolatrous to the Reformers.⁵

(2) They saw a danger that we should ascribe to Blessed Mary and the saints some independent position of their own, something which they have acquired for themselves by their own efforts, and should set them over against the Lord Christ. It was the practical failure of late medieval religion to see that what we honour in the saints is what God has done in them, which most hardened the Reformers against the traditional doctrines and devotions. In particular there would have been unanimity in saying with Bishop George Bull (1634-1710): 'We abhor to divide the divine kingdom and empire, giving one half, the better half, the kingdom of mercy to the blessed Virgin, and leaving only the kingdom of justice to her Son. This is downright treason against the only universal King and Monarch of the world.'⁶ This unfortunate notion of Mary as presiding in heaven with mercy, while her Son presides with justice, is one which comes again and again in the polemical writing of the time. And to it the Anglican writers can only say, 'There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.'⁷

(3) There is a universal repudiation of Invocation; of the invocation of Blessed Mary and the saints. But here we must pause to ask what exactly is meant. In modern usage, to invoke means to ask for the prayers of the saints. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it was different. Those who repudiate 'invocation' may at the same time strongly affirm their belief that the saints do pray for us, and may even be willing that we should ask them to do so. Bishop William Forbes (1585-1634) for instance writes:

The word invocation, when used with regard to the saints, is generally almost unbearable to Protestant ears, because to invoke God is, strictly speaking, to call upon him to help us with a religious affection of heart, or even to call him into the heart, as Jerome or rather Bede and Augustine write: and this cannot be said of the saints.⁸

⁵ For the Eastern view cf. the essay of Vladimir Lossky in *The Mother of God*, ed. E. L. Mascall, pp. 24-36.

⁶ *The Works of George Bull*, ed. E. Burton, 1827, vol. I, pp. 104-105.

⁷ I Tim 2:5.

⁸ William Forbes, *Considerationes Modestae*, Vol. II, pp. 211-213, L.A.C.T.

The mere addressing of angels and saints, inviting them to pray with us and for us to God, in the same way that we ask good people during their lifetime here to intercede with God for us . . . we with those Protestants who prefer to speak more clearly and carefully in this matter, call advocacy, rather than invocation, a calling unto rather than a calling upon.⁹

This practice Forbes believes to be primitive and wholly edifying. It is a thing in itself 'indifferent', having no command in Scripture, though in his judgement it is agreeable to Scripture. And therefore it is not to be rejected.

Not all writers make the nice distinctions of Forbes on this subject. Most would have been content to say that, while we may not address the saints and angels directly, we may and should praise them and thank God for their examples. George Herbert, in his much read volume of poems, declares that it is only the lack of clear authority from our Lord which prevents him from asking directly for their prayers. In 'To All Angels and Saints', he writes:

Not out of envy or maliciousness
Do I forbear to crave your special aid:
I would address
My vows to thee most gladly, Blessed Maid
And Mother of my God, in my distress.
Thou art the holy mine, whence came the gold,
The great restorative for all decay
In young and old;
Thou art the cabinet where the jewel lay:
Chiefly to thee would I my soul unfold:
But now, alas, I dare not; for our King,
Whom we do all jointly adore and praise
Bids no such thing.¹⁰

But Forbes is not alone in going further than this, and it becomes clear that the rejection of invocation is more a rejection of worship of the saints than of their 'invocation' in the narrower, modern sense of the word. Herbert Thorndike (1598-1672), for instance, treats of the matter at greater length than most of his contemporaries. In his discussion of the question he maintains both that the saints in heaven pray for us, and that we should pray for the faithful departed.

9 Op. cit., p. 211. 10 *The Works of George Herbert* (ed. F. E. Hutchinson), p. 78.

There is [he writes] the same ground to believe the communion of saints, in the prayers, which those that depart in the highest favour with God make for us; in the prayers, which we make for those that depart in the lowest degree of favour with God, that there is for the common Christianity; namely the Scriptures interpreted by the perpetual practice of God's Church.¹¹

In another work he distinguishes three kinds of prayers. First there are those addressed to God, asking him to hear the prayers of the saints on our behalf, and he specifically quotes the canon of the Latin Mass as an example. Secondly there are prayers addressed to the saints asking them to pray for us. Thirdly there are those 'when they desire immediately of them the same blessings, spiritual and temporal, which all Christians desire of God. There is a psalter to be seen, with the name of God changed everywhere into the name of the Blessed Virgin.'¹² Of these Thorndike considered the first type wholly commendable, and advocated its re-introduction into the public worship of the Church of England. The second, though innocent in themselves, are not, he thinks, to be commended since they lead to abuses. As to the third, 'taking them at the foot of the letter, and valuing the intent of those that use them by nothing but the words of them, [they] are mere idolatries; as desiring of the creature that which God only gives, which is the worship of the creature for the Creator, God blessed for ever more.'¹³ Of course, Thorndike admits that such prayers need not be taken in so literal a way. But this is no reason why they should be retained, for they are too liable to be misunderstood.

We may perhaps feel from our present vantage-point that our seventeenth-century Fathers were too negative in their attitude to this subject. The traditional expressions and practices against which they protested do not necessarily have the sinister implications which they saw in them, particularly when they are placed within the context of a well-balanced and well-informed Christocentric faith and life. But it is hard to say that

¹¹ H. Thorndike, *Works*, vol. V, p. 248, L.A.C.T.

¹² *Ibid.*, vol. IV, pt. II, pp. 768-769, L.A.C.T.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 770.

their protest was altogether unnecessary or unjustified, in the conditions of their time.¹⁴ We must indeed surely agree that they had their priorities right, even though they drew unnecessarily negative inferences from them. The great principles, that all glory is to God, and all grace from God, that there is one mediator between God and men, Jesus Christ, these are essential and central affirmations of the faith. And the questions which were then raised about devotion to Blessed Mary and the saints are surely questions which need constantly to be faced within Catholicism, if the traditional beliefs and practices are to be maintained within the proportion of faith.

But while there was this great alteration in devotion, there was at least, during our period, no corresponding break in Marian doctrine. As Père Stanislas Cwertniak points out in his valuable study *La Vierge Marie dans La Tradition Anglicane*, we can find either affirmations or at least echoes of the whole range of traditional teaching in the writers of this period. Here again it is important to remember that their situation was different from ours. On the one side, the doctrines of the Assumption and the Immaculate Conception had not been formally defined. On the other, the problems raised by the historical study of the New Testament had hardly yet been glimpsed. The theologians of this period tended therefore simply to maintain the traditional beliefs of the Church on this subject, with varying degrees of emphasis. There was, I think we may say, a gradation of importance seen in the different beliefs about Our Lady. The Virgin Birth itself was not questioned; nor was the term *θεοτόκος*, the mother of God. It was a term defined at the Council of Ephesus, and this was a fact of the greatest significance for those who acknowledged, as did the writers of the time, the authority of the first four councils. Furthermore, its intimate connection with orthodox Christology was universally recognized, so that even those who tend to be fiercest against what they consider Roman abuses, maintain the use of this term.

Closely connected with this doctrine is the belief in our Lady's perpetual virginity. Bull, in the sermon from which we have

¹⁴ For a well-documented and temperate account of some of the exaggerations of Marian devotion against which they were reacting see Hilda Graef, *Mary, A History of Doctrine and Devotion*.

already quoted, and in which he says very harsh things about Roman practice, says,

Now the necessary consequence of this dignity of the blessed Virgin [viz., that she was the Mother of God] is, that she remained for ever a virgin, as the catholic church hath always held and maintained. For it cannot with decency be imagined, that the most holy vessel, which was thus once consecrated to be a receptacle of the Deity, should afterwards be desecrated and profaned by human use.¹⁵

On this subject one could draw up an impressive weight of testimony from some of the greatest writers of the time, Andrewes, Hooker, Pearson, and Taylor. It is enough perhaps to quote the latter:

And He that came from His grave fast tied with a stone and a signature, and into the college of the apostles 'the doors being shut', and into the glories of His Father through the solid orbs of all the firmament, came also (as the Church piously believes) into the world so without doing violence to the virginal and pure body of His mother, that He did also leave her virginity entire, to be a seal, that none might open the gate of that sanctuary; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, 'This gate shall be shut, it shall not be opened, and no man shall enter in by it; because the Lord God of Israel hath entered by it, therefore it shall be shut.' (Ezek 44 : 2.)¹⁶

Or, again, 'As there was no sin in the conception, so neither had she pains in the production, as the Church from the days of Gregory Nazianzen until now, hath piously believed, though before his days there were some opinions to the contrary, but certainly neither so pious, nor so reasonable.'¹⁷ Whatever may be our judgement about the literalism of this belief in the miraculous manner of our Lord's birth, we should surely take with full seriousness the weight of evidence from within our own tradition, for belief in the ἀειπαρθένος, the perpetual virginity, with θεοτόκος, the oldest and most crucial of our Lady's titles.

¹⁵ Op. cit., p. 96.

¹⁶ *The Works of Jeremy Taylor*, ed. R. Heber and C. P. Eden, vol. II, p. 65.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 64.

When we come to the doctrines of the Immaculate Conception and the Assumption, we have much less material to go on. Nor is this surprising. It was the doctrines directly connected with the Incarnation which the Anglicans reckoned to be most important and, judged by that standard, these must hold a relatively secondary place. Furthermore, there was much less evidence for them in the Fathers of the first five or six centuries, who formed the favourite reading of so many of the divines of this period. We have seen how Ken affirms both doctrines openly. A more typical attitude, perhaps, is that of Bishop Cosin, who deals at some length with the question of the assumption in his *Notes on the Book of Common Prayer*. He says that the feast has been 'omitted in our kalendar, because there had been so many fabulous and superstitious stories devised about it in the Roman Church, where they now observe this day with more festival solemnity than they do the Ascension of Christ himself'.¹⁸ He quotes Durandus with approval as saying 'The truth is, that the blessed Virgin's soul was taken up into paradise; but whether her body was assumed thither or no we cannot certainly say; and it is better piously to doubt of it than rashly to affirm it, or to define anything about it.'¹⁹ For himself, he concludes after retailing the legends of our Lady's death,

All which narration, though in every particular the masters of the Roman Catholic assemblies do not make it a matter of faith, which every one is bound to hold under pain of damnation, yet are they willing enough that the common people should give credit to it, and make what use of it they please; commending it to them for good catholic probability, and the tradition of their Church, though not altogether so certain as some other matters are among them. In the meanwhile the whole story having no true ancient author to own it, is grounded only upon the conceit and fancy of some later men, who do not only put their own devices upon the world, as if they were all true, but fancy likewise a kind of necessity that they must be true, and that God could not in prudence order those matters otherwise than they have related them, or than they would have done them all themselves if they might have had the ordering of them.

¹⁸ J. Cosin, *Works*, vol. V, p. 203, L.A.C.T.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

And for this consideration it was, that the Church of England did by public authority abrogate this feast of the blessed Virgin's Assumption, whose soul nevertheless we believe to be assumed in paradise, there expecting the resurrection of her body (which was the choicest vessel of God's grace that ever the world had among all His saints) for the consummation of her endless felicity.²⁰

II

We come now to the more constructive part of our enquiry, that is to some examination of the way in which devotion to our Lady, and belief in her unique part in the history of salvation, expressed itself positively in the seventeenth century. We have already said that there was a great break in devotional practice. But this does not mean that there was a complete cessation of devotion. The fact that the subject holds only a small place in the Anglican writing of the period does not of itself indicate that there was no thought given to it. It was a commonplace of the writers of the time to point out the discreet place given to our Lady in the Gospels; they wished to emulate her discretion and her silence. The one famous exception to this rule is *The Female Glory* of Anthony Stafford, published in 1635 with the *imprimatur* of Archbishop Laud, 'in which,' as Dr Mascall remarks, 'there are manifested the most extravagant exuberances of the baroque imagination'. But that work can hardly be taken as representative, and its author was not a theologian.

Much more typical are the passages in Jeremy Taylor's *Life of Christ*, where he meditates at length upon the position of Mary at the Annunciation and at Bethlehem, considering her as a type of the devout Christian soul, and especially of the soul at prayer. He pictures her as one 'to whom the greatest things of religion and the transportations of devotion were made familiar by the assiduity and piety of her daily practices', so that at the moment of the Angel's message, 'however she was full of joy, yet she was carried like a full vessel, without the violent tossings of a tempestuous passion or the wrecks of a stormy imagination'.²¹

There are some curiosities so bold and determinate, as to tell the very matter of her prayer [at that moment], and that she was

20 Op. cit., p. 217.

21 Ibid., p. 51.

praying for the salvation of all the world, and the revelation of the Messiah. . . . We have no security of the particular; but there is no piety so diffident as to require a sign to create belief that her employment at the instant was holy and religious; but in that disposition she received a grace which the greatest queens would have purchased with the quitting of their diadems, and hath consigned an excellent document to all women, that they accustom themselves often to those retirements where none but God and His angels can have admittance.²²

And then he goes on to draw out the consideration of the Blessed Virgin, as the type and example of the contemplative life, in a passage which reveals not only the diffuse glory of his style, but something of the depth and acuteness of his thought.

And it is not altogether inconsiderable to observe, that the holy Virgin came to a great perfection and state of piety by a few, and those modest and even exercises and external actions. St Paul travelled over the world, preached to the gentiles, disputed against the Jews, confounded heretics, writ excellently learned letters, suffered dangers, injuries, affronts, and persecutions to the height of wonder, and by these violences of life, action, and patience, obtained the crown of an excellent religion and devotion. But the holy Virgin, although she engaged sometimes in an active life, and in the exercise of an ordinary and small oeconomy and government or ministries of a family, yet she arrived to her perfections by the means of a quiet and silent piety, the internal actions of love, devotion, and contemplation; and instructs us, that not only those who have opportunity and powers of a magnificent religion, or a pompous charity, or miraculous conversion of souls, or assiduous and effectual preachings, or exterior demonstrations of corporal mercy, shall have the greatest crowns, and the addition of degrees and accidental rewards; but the silent affections, the splendours of an internal devotion, the unions of love, humility, and obedience, the daily offices of prayer and praises sung to God, the acts of faith and fear, of patience and meekness, of hope and reverence, repentance and charity, and those graces which walk in a veil and silence, make great ascents to God, and as sure progress to favour and a crown, as the more ostentatious and laborious exercises of a more solemn religion. No man needs to complain of a want of power or opportunities for religious perfections; a devout woman in her closet, praying

with much zeal and affections for the conversion of souls, is in the same order to a 'shining like stars in glory' as he who by excellent discourses puts it into a more forward disposition to be actually performed. And possibly her prayers obtained energy and force to my sermon, and made the ground fruitful, and the seed spring up to life eternal.²³

It is noteworthy that these passages of Jeremy Taylor speak always of our Lady either in direct relation with her part in the mystery of the Incarnation, or as she stands as a model for every Christian. The same quality could be found in the writings of other Anglicans of this period, and we find it pre-eminently in the sermons of Mark Frank, who has spoken more fully on this subject than perhaps any of his contemporaries.²⁴

Mark Frank was a member of Cambridge University. A fellow of Pembroke in 1634, in 1644 he was ejected for refusing to take the covenant. In 1662, after the restoration, he became Master of his college. Chaplain to Archbishop Juxon, and domestic chaplain to his successor, Sheldon, he was a man clearly marked out for high preferment, had not his life been cut short at the age of fifty-one. We are dealing, then, with one whose writings cannot be dismissed as eccentric, or untypical of their times.²⁵ I intend to quote at some length from his sermons because this is the only way in which we may sense both the warmth of his devotion to our Lady, and the manner in which it fits naturally as an essential part into his whole picture of the Christian religion. In these sermons we may see how he shows us the humble Virgin as Mother of God, as type of the Church and every faithful Christian, shows us Christ's presence in her as related to his continuing presence in the life and sacraments of the Church, and shows us her part in the mystery of Emmanuel, God with us.

It is naturally enough in his sermon for the feast of the Annunciation that he deals most at length with our subject. But before we come to that let us see how he treats it in his sermons for Christmas and Epiphany. In his first sermon for

23 Op. cit., pp. 54-55.

24 I am grateful to the Rev. Roger Greenacre for first drawing my attention to the sermons of Mark Frank.

25 In his article in the *D.N.B.* Edmund Venables remarks: 'These sermons deserve notice as the productions of a sound but not extreme Churchman—plain, sensible, and evangelical discourses.'

the Epiphany, he paints a picture of the arrival of the Wise Men, who 'when they were come into the house . . . saw the young Child with Mary his mother, and fell down and worshipped him',²⁶ and he interprets 'the house' as the Church of God in which the whole restored universe gathers together to worship the redeemer.

I do not wonder interpreters make this house the church of God. It is the gate and court of heaven, now Christ is here; angels sing round about it; all holiness is in it, now Christ is in it: here all the creatures, reasonable and unreasonable, come to pay their homage to their Creator; hither they come even from the ends of the earth, to their devotions; 'a house of prayer' it is 'for all people', Gentiles and all; hither they come to worship, hither they come to pay their offerings and their vows; here is the shrine and altar, the glorious Virgin's lap, where the Saviour of the world is laid to be adored and worshipped; here stands the star for tapers to give light; and here the wise men this day become the priests—worship and offer, present prayers and praises, for themselves and the whole world besides; all people of the world, high and low, learned and ignorant, represented by them.²⁷

It is a picture with Mary at the centre, not herself the object of worship and adoration, but the altar, the shrine, the holy place, where God is to be found.

The eloquence of this sermon is more than matched by that of the Second Sermon for Christmas Day. Here the text is Lk 2:2, 'And she brought forth her first-born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.' The sermon opens abruptly with a shout of praise and thanksgiving for the incarnation of the Eternal Son:

I shall not need to tell you who this 'she' or who this 'him'. The day rises with it in its wings. This day wrote it with the first ray of the morning sun upon the posts of the world. The angels sung it in their choirs, the morning stars together in their courses. The Virgin Mother, the Eternal Son. The most blessed among women, the fairest of the Sons of men. The woman clothed with the sun, the sun compassed with a woman. She the gate

6 Mat 2:11.

27 Mark Frank, *Sermons*, vol. I, p. 280.

of heaven, he the King of Glory that came forth. She the mother of the everlasting God: he God without a mother; God blessed for ever more. Great persons as ever met upon a day.

Yet as great as the persons, and great as the day, the great lesson of them both is to be little, to think and make little of ourselves; seeing the infinite greatness in this day become so little, Eternity a child, the rays of glory wrapt in rags, Heaven crowded into the corner of a stable, and He that is everywhere want a room.²⁸

The whole sermon is a proclamation of the mystery of God's humility, of the great mystery of the Gospel, that God comes to us in flesh, and that the riches of eternity are made known in all the poverty of time. It is a sermon of bringing forth, of fruitfulness and fecundity, for we are to 'suffer him to be born in us, who was born for us'.²⁹ And if as the preacher declares 'the whole business is between two persons, the mother and the child',³⁰ yet we are to know that it concerns us too, for we too are called, in a different way, to bring forth Christ. 'The pure virgin pious soul is this "she" that brings forth Christ, the nourishing and cherishing of him, and all his gifts and graces, is this wrapping him in swaddling clothes; the laying up his word, his promises and precepts in our hearts, is the laying him in the manger.'³¹ 'It is a day of bringing forth, sure there is no being barren.'³²

And God works at all times in this same mysterious, hidden, sacramental way. This whole gospel

was wrapped up in clothes that seeing we might see and not presently understand, a mystery kept secret since the world began; his doctrine wrapped in parables, his grace covered in the sacraments, the inward grace in the outward elements, his great apostolic functions in poor simple fishermen, his Universal Church in a few obscured disciples in Judaea, the height of his knowledge in the simplicity of faith, the excellency of his precepts in the plainness of his speech, and the glory of the end they drive to in the humility of the way they lead. Well may the prophet exclaim, *Vere tu es Deus absconditus!* 'Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.'³³

28 Op. cit., p. 77.

31 Ibid., p. 90.

29 Ibid., p. 89.

32 Ibid., p. 91.

30 Ibid., p. 78.

33 Ibid., p. 87.

Towards the end of the sermon, there comes an application of the whole to the Eucharist, an exhortation to the Communion. It is in the setting of the Sacrament that the preaching of the Word finds its proper place; it is at this point that it is prescribed in the Prayer Book. And though the name of Mary is never mentioned in this passage, the thought of her is not far absent, for it is she whom we are to imitate, and this thought becomes explicit in the corresponding paragraph of the sermon for the Annunciation, which we shall quote later.

What though there be no room for him in the inn? I hope there is in our houses for him. It is Christmas time, and let us keep open house for him; let his rags be our Christmas raiment, his manger our Christmas cheer, his stable our Christmas great chamber, hall, dining room. We must clothe with him, and feed with him, and lodge with him at this feast. He is now ready by and by to give himself to eat; you may see him wrapped ready in the swaddling clothes of his blessed sacrament; you may behold him laid upon the altar as in his manger. Do but make room for him and we will bring him forth, and you shall look upon him, and handle him, and feed upon him; bring we only the rags of a rent and torn and broken and contrite heart, the white linen cloths of pure intentions and honest affections to swathe him in, wrap him up fast, and lay him close to our souls and bosoms. It is a day of mysteries: it is a mysterious business we are about; Christ wrapped up, Christ in the sacrament, Christ in a mystery; let us be content to let it go so, believe, admire and adore it.³⁴

But we must come to the sermon on the Annunciation itself. Here the oblique references become explicit, and we have a direct statement of the place of Blessed Mary in the scheme of our redemption. The text is Lk 1:28, 'And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.' Even here, the preacher shows a certain reluctance at treating the matter directly, so much does he feel that a reverent silence is fitting before the mystery of the Mother of God. But the times demand it.

Nor should I scarce, I confess, have chosen such a theme to-day, though the Gospel reach it me, but that I see it is time to do it,

when our Lord is wounded through our Lady's sides; both our Lord and the Mother of our Lord, most vilely spoken of by a new generation of wicked men, who, because the Romanists make little less of her than a goddess, they make not so much of her as a good woman; because they bless her too much, these unbless her quite, at least will not suffer her to be blessed as she should.³⁵

Men's irreverence has gone so far that they do not even give to Mary that title which the Angel himself had bestowed.

We are not to salute great persons by their names, but by their titles; and the Mother of God is above the greatest we meet with upon earth. We must not be too familiar with those whom God so highly favours; that is our lesson hence. We are not to speak of the blessed Virgin, the Apostles, and Saints, as if we were speaking to our servants, Paul, Peter, Mary, or the like. It is a new fashion of religion, neither taken from saints, nor angels, nor any of heaven or heavenly spirits, to unsaint the saints, to deny them their proper titles, to level them with the meanest of our servants.³⁶

What then is the main theme of the sermon? The Angel's salutation gives it to us. The Lord is with thee. Here is the heart of the matter.

Indeed *Dominus tecum* is the chief business; the Lord Christ's being with her, that which the Church especially commemorates in the days. Her being 'blessed', and all our being 'blessed', 'highly favoured', or favoured at all, either men or women being so, all our hail, all our health, and peace, and joy, all the angels' visits to us, or kind words, all our conferences with heaven, all our titles and honours in heaven and earth, that are worth the naming, come only from it. For *Dominus tecum* cannot come without them; he cannot come to us but we must be so, must be highly favoured in it, and blessed by it. So the Incarnation of Christ, and the Annunciation of the blessed Virgin—his being incarnate of her, and her blessedness by him, all our blessedness in him with her, make it as well our Lord's as our Lady's day. More his, because his being Lord made her a Lady, else a poor carpenter's wife, God knows; all her worthiness and honour, as all ours, is from him; and we to take heed today, or any day, of parting them;

35 Op. cit., vol. II, pp. 35 and 36.

36 Ibid., p. 45.

or so remembering her, as to forget him; or so blessing her, as to take away any of our blessing him; any of his worship, to give to her. Let her blessedness, the respect we give her, be *inter mulieres*, 'among women', still; such as is fit and proportionate to weak creatures, not due and proper only to the Creator, that *Dominus tecum*, Christ in her be the business; that we take pattern by the Angel, to give her no more than is her due, yet to be sure to give her that though, and particularly upon the day.³⁷

All is of God's free grace, and 'He is her Lord as well as ours. More, indeed, he is with her than with us, or with angels either . . .; but he is her Lord still for all that, and she is content so to acknowledge it, and leave us a penned hymn in witness of it, to give him the sole honour of her magnifying and being magnified.'³⁸

This is not of course to deny that she has a unique place in the work of the Gospel, and a unique privilege.

He is not with her, as he is with any else. *Tecum in mente, tecum in ventre* as the Fathers gloss it; *Tecum in spiritu, tecum in carne*, with her he was, or would be presently, as well in her body as in her soul, personally, essentially, nay bodily with her, and take a body from her—a way of being with any never heard before or since—a being with her beyond any expression or conception whatsoever. And the Lord thus being with her, all good must needs be with her: all the gracious ways of his being with us are comprehended in it; so the salutation no way to be exceeded. And well may he choose to be with her—even make haste and prevent the Angel, as St Bernard speaks, to be with her. He is with 'the pure of heart', with the humble spirit, and piously retired soul, and she is all.³⁹

And so in a passage where he gathers together the traditional interpretations of the name Mary, Frank can celebrate the greatness of the holy maiden.

Maria is *maris stella* says St Bede: 'the star of the sea'; a fit name for the mother of the bright Morning Star that rises out of the vast sea of God's infinite and endless love. Maria, the Syriac interprets *Domina*, 'a lady', a name yet retained and given to her by all Christians; our lady, or the Lady Mother of our Lord.

37 Op. cit., p. 34.

38 Ibid., p. 49.

39 Ibid., pp. 43-44.

Maria, rendered by Petrus Damiani, *de monte et altitudine Dei*, highly exalted, as you would say, like the mountain of God, in which he would vouchsafe to dwell, after a more miraculous manner than in very Sion, his 'own holy mount'. St Ambrose interprets it, *Deus ex genere meo*, 'God of my kin'; as if by her very name she was designed to have God born of her, to be *Deipara*, as the Church, against all heretics, has ever styled her, the Mother of God.⁴⁰

From the theological point of view, one of the most interesting passages in the sermon is that where he discusses the meaning of *κεχαριτωμένη*, highly favoured, full of grace. We have already seen his insistence that all the blessedness of our Lady is of God's pure grace, and it is noteworthy that in this sermon he nowhere uses the term 'merit'. In this sense he seems to belong on the reformation side of the controversy and to be thinking of grace as *favor Dei*, rather than as *gratia infusa*. But in fact he refuses to recognize an opposition between the two, and having as it were recognized a certain primacy in the idea of *favor Dei*, serenely equates them.

'Thou that art highly favoured' so our new translation renders it; 'full of grace', so our old one hath it, from the Latin *gratia plena*; and both right; for *κεχαριτωμένη* will carry both. Grace is favour; God's grace is divine favour; high in grace, high in his favour; full of his grace, full of his favour,—all comes to one.⁴¹

He goes on to distinguish between created and uncreated grace.

Created grace [he writes] is either sanctifying or edifying; the gifts of the Holy Spirit that sanctify and make us holy; or the gifts that make us serviceable to make others so. . . . Of each kind she had her fullness according to her measure, and the designation that God appointed her. For sanctifying graces, none fuller, *solo Deo excepto*, 'God only excepted', saith Epiphanius. And it is fit enough to believe that she who was so highly honoured to have her womb filled with the body of the Lord, had her soul as fully filled by the Holy Ghost.

For edifying graces, as they came not all into her measure, she was not to preach, to administer, to govern, to play the apostle,

⁴⁰ Op. cit., pp. 39-40.

⁴¹ Ibid., pp. 45-46.

and therefore no necessity she should be full of all those gifts, being those are not distributed all to any, but . . . to everyone according to his measure and employment, and not at all times neither; so neither is she said to be less full for wanting them. . . . Where any edifying grace was necessary for her, she had it as well as others; more perhaps than others. Where it was not necessary, it was no way to the impairing of her fullness, though she had it not.⁴²

But [he continues] in respect of the increated grace, that is, of Christ, with whom she was now so highly favoured as to be with child, none ever so filled with grace indeed. This was a grace of the highest nature of which created nature was never capable; *κεχαριτωμένη* well rendered 'highly, highly favoured'; for it is most highly can be imagined, and this is her first title, 'O thou that art highly favoured'; high in God's grace and favour—so high, as to be made his mother, then, sure, made a fit receptacle for so great, so holy a guest, by the fullness of all grace and goodness.⁴³

There follows a wonderful section in which he enumerates the blessings of the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, the blessings promised to faithful Israel, and applies them, one by one to the virgin daughter of Sion, and which he concludes with the interpretation of the crucial verses in Lk 11:27–28, which far from taking away from the glory of the Lord's mother, are an indication of the true glory of her who 'kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart'.⁴⁴

From this follows the second title, 'blessed', blessed of God, blessed of men; blessed in the city, and blessed in the field. Cities and countries call her blessed; blessed in the fruit of her body, in her blessed child Jesus. Blessed in the fruit of her ground, her cattle, her kine, and her sheep, in the inferior faculties of her soul and body; all fructify to Christ. Blessed her basket and her store, her womb and her breasts; the womb that bare him, and the paps that gave him suck. Blessed in her going out and her coming in, the Lord still being with her; the good treasure of heaven still open to her, showering down upon her, and the earth filled with the blessings which she brought into the world, when she brought forth the Son of God. Blessed she indeed that was the conduit of so great blessings, though blessed most in the bearing him in her soul, much more than bearing him in her body.

42 Op. cit., p. 46.

43 Ibid., p. 46.

44 Lk 2:19.

So Christ intimates to the woman that began to 'bless the womb', that is, the mother 'that bare him'; 'Yes rather,' says he, 'they that hear the word of God and keep it'; as if he had said, She is more blessed in bearing the word in her soul than in her body.⁴⁵

Here indeed we have a rejoicing in the fruitfulness of the created order, the good earth, open to God's grace and mercy which look down from heaven on it; and within this whole creation, it is she who heard the Word of God and kept it, who is at its centre and its heart.

So the sermon draws towards its conclusion. Before it comes, we are warned again, in passages which have been already quoted, against giving to Mary that glory which is God's alone. The preacher will not let us fall into that error.

Give we her in God's name the honour due to her. God hath styled her 'blessed' by the Angel, by Elisabeth; commanded all generations to call her so, and they hitherto have done it, and let us do it too. Indeed, some of late have overdone it; yet let us not therefore under-do it, but do it as we hear the Angel and the first Christians did it; account of her and speak of her as the most blessed among women, one 'highly favoured', most highly too. But all the while *Dominus tecum*, all the glory, the whole glory of all to him; give her the honour and blessedness of the chief of saints—him only, the glory that she is so, and that by her conceiving and bringing our Saviour into the world we are made heirs and shall one day be partakers of the blessedness she enjoys, when the Lord shall be with us too, and we need no angel at all to tell us so.⁴⁶

Here is the first theme which we have noticed, not only in Frank, but more generally in the Anglican writing of the time, the desire to think only of our Lady in relation to the incarnation of the Lord, her Lord and ours.⁴⁷ And it leads us directly to the second, the thought that Mary stands for every Christian soul in whom the Lord is to be born.

⁴⁵ Op. cit., pp. 47-48.

⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that this desire to reincorporate Mariology into the whole body of Christian doctrine, so that it no longer stands in isolation or independently, is characteristic of much Roman Catholic writing on this subject to-day. Cf. e.g. René Laurentin, *Court Traité de Théologie Mariale* (3rd Edn.), pp. 134-135, and the interesting discussion in Charles Moeller's *Mentalité Moderne et Évangélisation* (2nd edn. 1962), especially pp. 271-273.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 50.

Especially if we now here dispose ourselves by chastity, humility, and devotion, as she did, to receive him, and let him be new born in us. The pure and virgin soul, the humble spirit, the devout affection, will be also highly favoured; the Lord be with them and bless them above others. Blessed is the virgin soul, more blessed than others, in S. Paul's opinion; blessed the humble spirit above all. For God hath exalted the humble and meek, the humble handmaid better than the proudest lady. Blessed the devout affection that is always watching for her Lord in prayer and meditations; none so happy, so blessed as she; the Lord comes to none so soon as such.⁴⁸

And now he turns, as so often at the end of his sermons, to the holy sacrament about to be celebrated, and so naturally brings us to the third theme in his whole exposition; Christ's presence in the flesh through the child-bearing of blessed Mary, as the foundation of his presence in the Church, in each Christian, and particularly in the Holy Eucharist, the focal point of the whole mystery of God's living presence among his people.

Yet not to such at any time more fully than in the blessed Sacrament to which we are now a-going. There he is strangely with us, highly favours us, exceedingly blesses us; there we are all made blessed Marys, and become mothers, sisters, and brothers of our Lord, whilst we hear his word, and conceive it in us; whilst we believe him who is the Word, and receive him too into us. There angels come to us on heavenly errands, and there our Lord indeed is with us, and we are blessed, and the angels hovering all about us to peep into those holy mysteries, think us so, call us so. There graces pour down in abundance on us—there grace is in its fullest plenty,—there his highest favours are bestowed upon us—there we are filled with grace unless we hinder it, and shall hereafter in the strength of it be exalted into glory—there to sit down with this blessed Virgin and all the saints and angels, and sing praise, and honour, and glory, to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, for ever and ever.⁴⁹

III

It is clear that in the matter of Mariology, the Church of England has not much to give, and very much to gain from contact with the rest of Christendom. But it is hoped that what

⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, p. 50.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

has been written here will be enough to show that we have something to contribute. It may be that the teaching of a number of seventeenth-century theologians, and they all of one school of thought, does not seem very much to set over against a great deal of negative, polemical literature, and a very great popular neglect. But it is not nothing, and it reveals that the writers quoted did not intend, any more than I believe the original Reformers for the most part intended, to destroy the whole traditional veneration of the Blessed Virgin, but only to purify and question certain aspects of it, from within that same Catholic tradition.⁵⁰

The results of their action have been nonetheless the virtual ignoring of blessed Mary in a large part of modern Protestantism, and this may well make us judge that they were too negative in their attitude towards the liturgical expression of devotion to her, for the belief in her divine maternity which they did not repudiate, cannot remain alive in the body of the Church, unless it finds expression both in personal and public devotion. Our present situation, and above all our contacts with the East and with our Roman Catholic brethren, may show us that they were sometimes 'afraid, where no fear was'. But we must be grateful to them for constantly bringing us back to the one essential point that our redemption is through the incarnation, death, and resurrection of our Lord, and reminding us that Mary's role must always be seen in direct relation with that.

And as Anglicans, too, we must be grateful, that within our Church, the tradition of devotion to the Blessed Mother has never altogether died away. For indeed wherever the Magnificat is recited daily at Evensong, and the feasts of the Purification

⁵⁰ This is a point which finds confirmation in a recently published book by Walter Tappolet, *Das Marienlob der Reformatoren* (1962). It contains an impressive amount of Marian material from the writings of the continental Reformers, and specially from Luther. The whole question of the cult of the saints in Lutheran tradition is dealt with in a very interesting way in Max Lackmann *L'Église Luthérienne et la Commemoration des Saints* (1963). In Denmark in the nineteenth century, devotion to our Lady finds striking expression in the writings of N. F. S. Grundtvig, who, for instance, in a hymn where he is summarizing the Christian faith, opens the second verse with the lines, 'God gave as his son to be our brother, Jesus Christ, God and man, therefore we praise his blessed mother, the Bride of heaven yet a virgin.' In speaking of the preparation for the Gospel in the Old Testament, he affirms that there were signs of faith, hope, and love even in the Old Covenant, as we see in 'Abraham, the hero of faith, John Baptist, the angel of hope, and the Virgin Mary, the heart's (or love's) Queen' [in the original 'Hjerte-Dronningen'].

and the Annunciation observed, and the Gospel records read and meditated on in this context, there thankfulness and love towards that silent, faithful figure can never wholly fail to spring forth. And that quiet, unobtrusive tradition of devotion might be seen best summed up, in the words of a hymn, written in the early years of the nineteenth century, before the Oxford Movement gave a sudden, new impetus to the praise of blessed Mary. It is of course a hymn from well outside the period with which we are dealing, yet in its spirit very typical of it, written by one of our first Bishops in India, the editor of Jeremy Taylor, Reginald Heber; and it has become well known and loved throughout the Church. If anything might claim to represent the common mind of the Church of England on this subject, it would be this. In its simplicity and theological balance it holds together in one, him to whom it is addressed, and the humble maiden who received her glory from him, the ever-virgin Mother of God.

Virgin-born, we bow before thee;
Blessed was the womb that bore thee;
Mary, Mother meek and mild,
Blessed was she in her Child.

Blessed was the breast that fed thee;
Blessed was the hand that led thee;
Blessed was the parent's eye
That watched thy slumbering infancy.

Blessed she by all creation,
Who brought forth the world's salvation,
And blessed they—for ever blest.
Who love thee most and serve thee best.

Virgin-born, we bow before thee;
Blessed was the womb that bore thee;
Mary, Mother meek and mild,
Blessed was she in her Child.⁵¹

51 *English Hymnal*, No. 640.

V

The Immaculate Conception

H. S. Box

THE Immaculate Conception cannot be regarded by Anglicans as an article of the faith, because it is not read in Holy Scripture, 'nor may be proved thereby'.¹ Nevertheless, it is eminently reasonable, and it seems to follow logically from Mary's unique position in the economy of Redemption. 'For those who believe thoroughly in the divine gift bestowed in Baptism, there can be no difficulty in believing in the Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God. It was but the anticipation of what is accomplished in our own persons by the same Divine Agent, only carried out and perpetuated to perfection in her case.'²

The doctrine of the Immaculate Conception does not, of course, mean that Mary was not redeemed. On the contrary, like all other members of the human race, she needed to be redeemed,³ and her preservation from original sin was entirely due to the redemptive merits of her Divine Son. From the physical point of view her conception was no different from ours. Unlike that of her Son, her own conception was not virginal; she was begotten by her parents according to the ordinary laws of nature, and so in common with all other human beings she stood in need of redemption. But a person may be redeemed in either of two ways: by being cleansed

¹ Article vi.

² E. S. Ffoulkes, *Christendom's Divisions*, p. 104 f.

³ 'Unique as was her office, magnificent as was the endowment of grace bestowed on her, singular as were her humility, her purity, her likeness to the Most Holy, she has and she needs a Saviour. . . . Hers is not a soul which finds its way to the courts of heaven without recourse to that One "Name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4: 12). There is, in fact, no intermediate position in the kingdom of grace between the Saviour and the saved; no neutral post, in which nothing is received and from which nothing is bestowed. . . . Mary owed, and owes what she was on earth, what she is in heaven, no less entirely to the merits and the Precious Blood of her Divine Son, than does the humblest Christian among us at this hour.' (H. P. Liddon, *The Magnificat*, Sermons in St Paul's, August 1889, p. 28.)

from sin after being stained by it, or by being kept free from it altogether. The second way is evidently the more perfect of the two, for to prevent someone from falling into something from which he would have to be rescued is the more excellent mode of deliverance. And so to maintain that 'the most blessed Virgin Mary in the first instant of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of Almighty God, in view of the merits of Christ Jesus, the Saviour of the human race, was preserved immune from all stain of original sin' is not to deny that she was redeemed by Christ, but rather to affirm that she was redeemed by him in a way which wonderfully redounds to his glory. In consideration of the future merits of her Divine Son, God intervened to prevent the calamity of her being stained with original sin, which would have happened if events had been allowed to take their normal course, so that in fact she was endowed with sanctifying grace from the first moment of her existence.⁴

Although the Fathers do not explicitly teach the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception, they lay down principles from which it naturally follows. 'In examining the testimonies of the Fathers, it becomes undeniable that whilst many of them speak in the sense of the Immaculate Conception, not a single one of their number has positively said that Mary had ever contracted original sin.'⁵ Two basic ideas, in which the doctrine is implicitly contained, appear in their testimony: Mary's spotless purity, and her position as the second Eve.

Regarding the first of these two ideas, Pope Pius IX pointed out in the Bull *Ineffabilis Deus* (8th December 1854) that

this doctrine took possession of the minds and hearts of our forefathers to such a degree that an unparalleled and altogether astonishing manner of speaking came into use among them, so that they very often called the Mother of God not only immaculate but in every respect immaculate, not only innocent but most innocent, not only unblemished but in every way unblemished,

4 Cf. J. Guitton, *The Blessed Virgin*, p. 98: 'To exclude any one creature from the act of universal redemption is to raise such a creature above humanity without warrant. But to include the mother of the Word in the solidarity of evil is to pollute the source of the supernatural life. These two necessary contradictions weighed one against the other until the Church became aware of a possible synthesis, namely, that this privilege, by which the Virgin was withdrawn from the solidarity of Adam's race, was conferred upon her in anticipation of the merits of Jesus Christ.'

5 W. B. Ullathorne, *The Immaculate Conception of the Mother of God*, p. 116.

holy and completely untouched by any stain of sin, wholly pure, wholly undefiled, and all but the very archetype of purity and innocence, more beautiful than beauty, more lovely than loveliness, more holy than holiness and alone holy and more pure in soul and body, who has excelled all integrity and virginity, and alone in her fullness has been made the dwelling-place of all the graces of the most Holy Spirit, and who, God alone excepted, is superior to all, and by nature is more beautiful, more comely, and more holy than the very Cherubim and Seraphim and the entire angelic host, she whom tongues celestial and terrestrial cannot sufficiently praise.

Secondly, the truth that our Lady was appointed by God to counteract the work of Eve, and that she is the second Eve in the same sense in which Christ is the second Adam, belongs to the universal and ancient tradition of Christian teaching. One Christian teacher, writing at the beginning of the third century, says: 'Eve had believed the serpent, Mary believed Gabriel. The fault which the one committed by believing, the other by believing has cancelled.'⁶ Before Tertullian wrote these words, another great teacher, St Irenaeus, had said the same thing:

The Virgin Mary is found obedient, saying, 'Behold thy hand-maid, O Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.' But Eve is found disobedient; for she did not obey, while she was still a virgin. As she, having Adam indeed for a husband, yet being still a virgin, . . . proving disobedient, became the cause of death both to herself and to the whole human race; so also Mary, having a husband fore-appointed, and yet a virgin, being obedient, became the cause of salvation both to herself and to the whole human race. . . . And so the knot of Eve's disobedience obtained its unloosing through the obedience of Mary. For that which the virgin Eve bound by unbelief, the Virgin Mary unloosed by faith.⁷

Again,

As Eve was led astray by an angel's discourse to avoid God after she had transgressed his word, so Mary, also by an angel's discourse, had the good tidings given her, that she might bear God, obeying his Word. And if the former had disobeyed God, yet the

6 Tertullian, *De Carne Christi*, 17; Migne, PL, ii. 782.

7 *Adv. Haer.*, III, xxii. 4; PG, vii. 958, 959, 960.

latter was persuaded to obey God, that the Virgin Mary might come to the rescue of the virgin Eve. And as the human race was bound to death through a virgin, it is saved through a Virgin; the balance is restored to equilibrium, and for a virgin's disobedience a remedy is found through a Virgin's obedience.⁸

Earlier still, in the middle of the second century, St Justin Martyr had pointed out that the disobedience due to the serpent had its destruction in the same manner in which it had its beginning. 'For Eve, being a virgin and undefiled, conceiving the word that was from the serpent, brought forth disobedience and death; but the Virgin Mary, receiving faith and joy, when the angel Gabriel told her the good tidings, that the Spirit of the Lord should come upon her . . . answered, "Be it unto me according to thy word".'⁹ Later we find St Jerome declaring, as though it had become almost a proverb: 'Death by Eve, life by Mary.'¹⁰

St Hippolytus (d. 235) associates Our Lord's sinlessness with that of his Mother. She is the 'incorruptible wood' out of which was fashioned the tabernacle of his body.

The ark which was made of incorruptible wood was the Saviour himself. By this was figured his tabernacle, which was imperishable and engendered no sinful decay. . . . The Lord was sinless, fashioned, according to his humanity, from incorruptible wood, that is, from the Virgin and the Holy Ghost, overlaid within and without as with the purest gold of the Word of God.¹¹

It was not until the twelfth century that any controversy arose about the Immaculate Conception. When the canons of Lyons (c. 1130-1140) began to celebrate the feast of Mary's Conception, St Bernard addressed to them a strong letter of protest, censuring them for taking the step on their own authority and without consulting the Apostolic See, and in the vehemence of his denunciation of this introduction of 'a new festival, a rite which the Church knows nothing of, and which reason does not prove, nor ancient tradition hand down to us',¹²

8 Ibid., V, xix. 1; PG, vii. 1175.

9 *Dial. c. Tryph.*, 100; PG, vi. 712.

10 *Epist.*, xxii. 21; PL, xxii. 408.

11 Quoted by Theodoret, *Dial.* i; PG, x. 864, 865.

12 *Epist.*, clxxiv. 1; PL, clxxxii. 333; *Works of St. Bernard*, ed. by S. J. Eales, vol. ii, p. 512.

he challenged the doctrinal significance of the feast. 'The Mother of the Lord, you say, ought greatly to be honoured. You say well, but the honour of a queen loves justice. The royal Virgin does not need false honour, since she is amply supplied with true titles to honour and badges of her dignity.'¹³

He raised no objection to the observance of the feast of Mary's Nativity.

Beyond doubt the Mother of the Lord . . . was holy before birth; nor is holy Church at all in error in accounting the day of her nativity holy, and celebrating it each year with solemn and thankful joy. I consider that the blessing of a fuller sanctification descended upon her, so as not only to sanctify her birth, but also to keep her life pure from all sin. . . . This singular privilege of sanctity, to lead her life without any sin, entirely befitted the queen of virgins, who should bear the Destroyer of sin and death, who should obtain the gift of life and righteousness for all. Therefore, her birth was holy, since the abundant sanctity bestowed upon it made it holy even from the womb.¹⁴

What St Bernard objected to was the attribution of holiness to our Lady's conception.

Whence, then [he asks] was the holiness of that conception? Shall it be said that Mary was so prevented by grace that, being holy before being conceived, she was therefore conceived without sin; or that, being holy before being born, she has therefore communicated holiness to her birth? But in order to be holy it is necessary to exist, and a person does not exist before being conceived. Or perhaps, when her parents were united, holiness was mingled with the conception itself, so that she was at once conceived and sanctified. But this is not tenable in reason. For how can there be sanctity without the sanctifying Spirit, or the co-operation of the Holy Spirit with sin? Or how could there not be sin where concupiscence was not wanting?¹⁵ Unless, perhaps, some one will say that she was conceived by the Holy Spirit, and not by man, which would be a thing hitherto unheard of.¹⁶

¹³ Ibid., 2; PL, clxxxii. 333; S. J. Eales, op. cit., p. 513.

¹⁴ Ibid., 4; PL, clxxxii. 334; S. J. Eales, op. cit., p. 515.

¹⁵ 'Many theologians of this period were of the persuasion that concupiscence, the material element of original sin, was transmitted by way of intercourse, in which the evil of concupiscence, although not culpable, was never wholly absent.' (P. F. Palmer, *Mary in the Documents of the Church*, p. 70, footnote.)

¹⁶ Ibid., 6; PL, clxxxii. 335; S. J. Eales, op. cit., p. 516 f.

It appears that St Bernard makes every supposition but the right one, namely, that Mary's soul might have been sanctified at the moment of its infusion into the body, and so he draws an erroneous conclusion: 'If, therefore, before her conception she could not possibly be sanctified, since she did not exist, nor in the conception itself, because of the sin which inhered in it, it remains to be believed that she received sanctification when existing in the womb after conception, which, by excluding sin, made her birth holy, but not her conception.'¹⁷ He concludes this letter by saying that he submits what he has written to the judgement of any one of maturer wisdom. 'Especially I refer the whole of it, as of all matters of a similar kind, to the authority and decision of the See of Rome, and I am prepared to modify my opinion if in anything I think otherwise than that See.'¹⁸

It seems that St Bernard had in mind only what is called the active conception, that is, the transmission of the body through the parents, and that he was not clearly aware of the fundamental distinction between this and the animation of the body by the infusion of the rational soul, which is known as the passive conception.

It has been said of St Anselm that in effect he affirmed the Immaculate Conception in his premises, though he formally denied it in his conclusions. In his treatise, *De Conceptu Virginali et Originali Peccato*, is found the oft-cited Mariological principle: 'It was becoming that she should shine with such a purity that under God none greater can be conceived, that Virgin to whom God the Father determined to give his only Son, whom, begotten as his equal, he loved from his heart as himself, so that he was naturally at one and the same time Son both of God the Father and of the Virgin.'¹⁹ But in the *Cur Deus Homo*, when his interlocutor, Boso, asks:

How did God take on himself from the sinful mass, that is, from the human race, which was wholly infected with sin, sinless humanity, as if something unleavened were taken from fermented dough? For granted that the conception of that man is pure and free from the sin of carnal delight, yet the Virgin herself, from

¹⁷ Ibid., 6; PL, clxxxii. 335, 336; S. J. Eales, op. cit., p. 517.

¹⁸ Ibid., 8; PL, clxxxii. 336; S. J. Eales, op. cit., p. 518.

¹⁹ Op. cit., 18; PL, clviii. 451.

whom he assumed humanity, was conceived in iniquities, and in sin did her mother conceive her, and she was born with original sin, inasmuch as she herself sinned in Adam, in whom all have sinned.

St Anselm replies: 'We ought not to be surprised if we cannot understand in what way the wisdom of God did this, but we should admit with reverence that in the secrets of so great a matter there is something of which we are ignorant.'²⁰

In what is 'one of the earliest systematic treatises on the doctrine'²¹ Eadmer²² argues 'to the fact of the Immaculate Conception from God's ability to bring it about'.²³

With regard to the human temple which he prepared for himself, that he might dwell bodily therein, and that from it humanity might be taken up into the unity of his person, could not God grant to it that although it was conceived among the thorns of sins, it should nevertheless be kept wholly free from the stings of the thorns? Clearly he could, and he willed it; if then he willed it he did it.²⁴

St Bonaventure (1221-1274) approaches nearer than many of the Schoolmen to understanding the true doctrine, and yet he cannot bring himself to make it his own.

Some would say that in the soul of the glorious Virgin the grace of sanctification prevented the stain of original sin, and they give as the reason for this that it was befitting that the soul of the glorious Virgin should be sanctified in a more excellent way than the souls of other saints, not only as touching the abundance of sanctity, but also as touching the hastening of time; therefore in the instant of her creation grace was infused into her, and in the same instant the soul was infused into the flesh. . . . But the position of others is that the sanctification of the Virgin was subsequent to the contraction of original sin, and this because no one was immune from the guilt of original sin except only the Son of the Virgin. For as the Apostle says in the third chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, 'All have sinned, and come short of the glory of

20 Op. cit., ii. 16; PL, clviii. 416, 417.

21 *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. by F. L. Cross, p. 432.

22 This work was formerly ascribed to St Anselm.

23 P. F. Palmer, op. cit., p. 72.

24 *De Concept. B. Mariae*; PL, clix. 305.

God'. . . . And this way of speaking is more common, and more reasonable, and more safe. More common, I say, because almost all hold that the Blessed Virgin had original sin. . . . It is also more reasonable, because to be in the order of nature precedes being in the order of grace, whether as regards time or nature;²⁵ and therefore Augustine says that 'to be born is prior to being reborn'. . . . Accordingly it is necessary to hold that the infection of original guilt came before sanctification. It is also more safe, because it is more consonant with the piety of faith and the authority of the saints.²⁶

What led many of the medieval theologians to oppose the Immaculate Conception was that they failed to grasp the essential point at issue. They formulated the question in a way that prejudiced the answer. Instead of asking whether the Blessed Virgin was sanctified at the moment of the infusion of her soul into her body, they asked whether she was sanctified before or after animation. They overlooked that besides sanctification before animation and sanctification after animation there was a third possibility, namely, that the soul could have been sanctified at the moment of its union with the body. 'To them the idea seemed strange that what was subsequent in the order of nature could be simultaneous in point of time. Speculatively taken, the soul must be created before it can be infused and sanctified, but, in reality, the soul is created and sanctified at the very moment of its infusion into the body.'²⁷

St Thomas Aquinas replies to the question, 'Whether the Blessed Virgin was sanctified before animation', by saying:

The sanctification of the Blessed Virgin cannot be understood to have taken place before her animation, and this for two reasons. First, because the sanctification of which we are speaking is nothing but the cleansing from original sin. . . . But guilt cannot be washed away except by grace, the subject of which is the rational creature alone; and therefore before the infusion of the rational soul the Blessed Virgin was not sanctified. Secondly, because, since it is the rational creature alone that is susceptible of guilt, before the infusion of the rational soul the offspring conceived is not subject to guilt. And so in whatever way the Blessed

25 *quia esse naturae praecedit esse gratiae, vel tempore vel natura.*

26 *In Sent.* iii. dist. 3, p. 1, a. 1, qu. 2.

27 F. G. Holweck, 'Immaculate Conception', in *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. vii, p. 679.

Virgin might have been sanctified before animation, she would never have incurred the stain of original guilt, and so she would not have needed that redemption and salvation which is through Christ. . . . But this is unfitting, inasmuch as it implies that Christ is not the Saviour of all men. . . . Hence it remains that the sanctification of the Blessed Virgin took place after her animation.²⁸

He goes on to say:

If the soul of the Blessed Virgin Mary had never been stained by the touch of original sin, this would detract from the dignity of Christ, by reason of his being the universal Saviour of all. And therefore under Christ, who, as the universal Saviour, did not need to be saved, the Blessed Virgin enjoyed the highest measure of purity. For Christ did not contract original sin in any way at all, but was holy in his very conception. . . . But the Blessed Virgin Mary did contract original sin, but was cleansed from it before her birth from the womb.²⁹

To the objection that 'no feast is observed except of some saint, and some observe the feast of the Conception of the Blessed Virgin', his answer is: 'Although the Roman Church does not celebrate the Conception of the Blessed Virgin, it nevertheless tolerates the custom of those Churches that do observe that festival; wherefore such observance is not to be altogether reprobated. Nevertheless, the observance of the feast of the Conception does not give us to understand that she was holy in her conception. But because it is not known when she was sanctified, the feast of her Sanctification, rather than that of her Conception, is observed on the day of her conception.'³⁰

The Angelic Doctor's chief difficulty seems to have arisen from his inability to understand how Mary could have been redeemed if she had not incurred the stain of original sin. He

28 *Sum. Theol.*, III. xxvii. 2.

29 *Ibid.*, ad. 2. Cf. St Bernard, *op. cit.*, 7; PL, clxxxii. 336; S. J. Eales, *op. cit.*, p. 517: 'Wherefore, although it has been given to some, though few, of the sons of men to be born with the gift of sanctity, yet to none has it been given to be conceived with it. So that to One alone should be reserved this privilege, to him who should make all holy, and coming into the world, he alone, without sin should make an atonement for sinners. The Lord Jesus, then, alone was conceived by the Holy Ghost, because he alone was holy before he was conceived. He being excepted, all the children of Adam are in the same case as he who confessed of himself with great humility and truth, *I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin hath my mother conceived me* (Ps. li. 5).'

30 *Ibid.*, ad. 3.

could not reconcile the exemption from original sin of one who had been born in descent from Adam with the doctrine of the universal need of redemption by Christ. It was Duns Scotus (d. 1308) who turned the tide of theological opinion in favour of the Immaculate Conception by removing this difficulty. He showed that so far from being excluded from Christ's redemption, Mary, by being preserved from original sin, was redeemed by the most perfect act of mediation.

He who is the most perfect mediator has a most perfect act of mediating with regard to some person on whose behalf he mediates. But Christ is the most perfect mediator. Therefore Christ had the most perfect way possible of mediating with regard to some creature or person respecting whom he was mediator. But respecting no person had he a more excellent relationship than with regard to Mary. Therefore, etc. But this would not be the case unless he had merited for her preservation from original sin.³¹

Again,

God could bring it about that Mary was never in original sin; he could also have brought it about that she should be for one instant only in sin; he could also bring it about that she should be for some time in sin, and at the end of that time should be purified from it. . . . Which of these three, which have been shown to be possible, actually happened is known to God. If there is no conflict with the authority of the Church or with the authority of Scripture, it seems probable that what is more excellent should be attributed to Mary.³²

The position adopted by the *Doctor Subtilis* in defence of the Immaculate Conception proved decisive. He laid the foundations of the doctrine so firmly, and answered so cogently the objections that had been raised against it, that from his time on it came to prevail. The Dominicans alone maintained their opposition, on account of the authority of Aquinas, but eventually even the Thomists gave way. Meanwhile certain preachers went so far as to charge those who held the contrary view with heresy, and Pope Sixtus IV had to intervene. In a constitution, *Grave nimis*, issued in 1483, he condemned those on either side who dared to assert that their opponents were guilty of heresy.

31 *In Sent.* iii. dist. 3, qu. 1, a. 2.

32 *Ibid.*, dist. 3, qu. 1, a. 1.

Those Anglicans who cannot bring themselves to hold the Immaculate Conception, even as a pious opinion, may find some support in the following words of Dr Darwell Stone:

It may well be regretted that the question whether the Blessed Virgin Mary was conceived without original sin was ever raised. Having been raised, it may be expected that, in the absence of authoritative teaching, there will be disagreement about it; and it does not appear to be of supreme importance that an individual should either reject or accept it. There can be no justification short of the supposition of the infallibility of the Pope for making such a matter a necessary part of the faith, as it was made for Roman Catholics in 1854.³³

On the other hand, it is improbable that the fifteenth of the Thirty-nine Articles, *Of Christ alone without Sin*,³⁴ was aimed against the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of our Lady. As Bishop Gibson points out,

The Blessed Virgin is not mentioned in the Article. As a rule the Articles are perfectly direct and plain-spoken in their condemnation of erroneous views, and if their compilers had had this doctrine in view it is most unlikely that they would have contented themselves with so *indirect* a condemnation of it. . . . The expression in the Article is, 'all we the rest, although baptized and born again in Christ', etc., and it would be perfectly open to a Romanist to hold that the Blessed Virgin was never baptized, and that, *therefore*, her case is not considered in the Article at all! . . . A far more probable view is that this Article (like the following one) was aimed against the errors of some among the Anabaptists.³⁵

The Immaculate Conception was a privilege bestowed upon Mary, not for her own sake, but to the honour of the Second

33 *Outlines of Christian Dogma*, 3rd edit., p. 60.

34 'Christ in the truth of our nature was made like unto us in all things, sin only except, from which he was clearly void, both in his flesh, and in his spirit. . . . But all we the rest, although baptized, and born again in Christ, yet offend in many things; and if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' Cf. Article ix: 'Original sin . . . is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is ingendered of the offspring of Adam; whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and is of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit; and therefore in every person born into this world, it deserveth God's wrath and damnation.' The Council of Trent, in its decree on original sin, declares that 'it is not its intention to include in this decree, where original sin is treated of, the blessed and immaculate Virgin Mary, Mother of God'.

35 *The Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England*, 6th edit., p. 440 f.

Person of the Blessed Trinity, to whom she gave human flesh and human birth.

He first of all [writes St Francis de Sales] destined for his most holy Mother a favour worthy of the love of a Son who, being all wise, all mighty, and all good, wished to prepare a mother to his liking; and therefore he willed his redemption to be applied to her after the manner of a preserving remedy, that the sin which was spreading from generation to generation should not reach her. She then was so excellently redeemed, that though when the time came, the torrent of original iniquity rushed to pour its unhappy waves over her conception, with as much impetuosity as it had done on that of the other daughters of Adam; yet when it reached there it passed not beyond, but stopped, as did anciently the Jordan in the time of Josue, and for the same respect: for this river held its stream in reverence for the passage of the Ark of Alliance; and original sin drew back its waters, revering and dreading the presence of the true Tabernacle of the eternal alliance. In this way then God *turned away all captivity* from his glorious Mother, giving her the blessing of both the states of human nature; since she had the innocence which the first Adam had lost, and enjoyed in an excellent sort the redemption acquired for her.³⁶

³⁶ *Treatise on the Love of God*, ii. 6; Eng. trans. by H. B. Mackey, Library of St Francis de Sales, vol. ii, p. 79.

VI

The Assumption

H. S. Box

BISHOP KEN (1637-1711) wrote in the hymn which we have as No. 217 in *The English Hymnal*:

Heaven with transcendent joys her entrance graced,
Next to his throne her Son his Mother placed;
And here below, now she's of heaven possest,
All generations are to call her blest.

The feast which is observed in many churches on the fifteenth of August, and which is sometimes called the Falling Asleep of the Blessed Virgin Mary, but more commonly the Assumption, is a very ancient festival and was universally celebrated throughout Christendom until the Reformation. The seventeenth-century Bishop Cosin, in his *Notes on the Book of Common Prayer*, says that it was 'omitted in our kalendar, because there had been so many fabulous and superstitious stories devised about it in the Roman Church, where they now observe this day with more festival solemnity than they do the Ascension of Christ himself'. He asserts that 'the story of her Assumption, now so much celebrated and generally believed in the Roman Church, is grounded only upon uncertain fables, first devised by men that gave their minds to vanity and superstition; of which kind the world never wanted store', and that it was for this reason 'that the Church of England did by public authority abrogate this feast of the Blessed Virgin's Assumption'.¹

On the other hand, Bishop Cosin's great contemporary, Bishop Pearson, who has been described as 'perhaps the most erudite and profound divine of a learned and theological age',²

¹ *Works*, Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, vol. v, pp. 203, 208, 217.

² *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*, edit. by F. L. Cross, p. 1037.

writes in his classical *Exposition of the Creed*: 'If Elisabeth cried out *with so loud a voice, Blessed art thou among women*, when Christ was but newly conceived in her womb; what expressions of honour and admiration can we think sufficient now that Christ is in heaven, and that mother with him?'³

Anthony Stafford, whose *Life of the Blessed Virgin*, called *The Female Glory* (1635), was licensed and defended by Archbishop Laud, cites a number of foreign Reformers 'because the Fathers are no way suspected of neglect towards her'.⁴ Treating of the Assumption, he says that 'many of the Fathers, all of the Romish Church, and some of the Reformed' hold this 'for an undoubted truth'.⁵ He quotes Heinrich Bullinger (1504-1575), Zwingli's successor, as saying: 'We do believe that the womb of the God-bearing Virgin, and the temple of the Holy Ghost, that is, her sacred body, to have been assumed into heaven.'⁶ Johann Brenz (1499-1570), a Lutheran divine, 'leaves it indifferent to us to believe whether or no she ascended in soul, in body, or both. "It might well be," saith he, "that as Enoch was translated in body into heaven, and as many bodies of the saints did rise with Christ; so Mary also might in body be assumed into heaven. But most certain it is that she obtained everlasting felicity."' ⁷

The doctrine of our Lady's bodily Assumption does not, of course, imply that she did not die. On the contrary, it has been universally believed from primitive times that she suffered temporal death.⁸ Nor are her resurrection and exaltation

3 Op. cit., ed. by E. Burton, 6th edit., p. 321.

4 Op. cit., ed. by O. Shipley, p. 173.

5 Ibid., p. 160.

6 *Lib. de origine erroris*, cap. 16.

7 *Homil. I in Die Assump. Virgin.* Ibid., p. 160 f.

8 Cf. J. N. W. B. Robertson, *The Acts and Decrees of the Synod of Jerusalem* [1672], p. 34 f.; E. J. Kimmel, *Monumenta Fidei Ecclesiae Orientalis*, i, p. 355 f.: 'The All-holy Virgin fell asleep, yet the cause of her falling asleep did not come from sin, but only from other causes that were physical; by which, accordingly, man had even before he sinned a physical nature, and was subject to corruption forsooth. Yet God had given him such grace that he might, independently of nature, and by grace alone, have procured that he might not have died. So also with regard to the Panagia, who, although she had no sin, nevertheless had in herself a physical nature, and as a human being was subject to death—she, likewise, had such grace from God that she might, had she so desired, not have died, but have passed, as it were, alive into the heavens; nevertheless, she did not so desire.' St Epiphanius (c. 315-403) points out that the Scriptures do not give us any information about Mary's death, but leave it undetermined whether she died or not, and whether she was buried or not. 'Simeon says concerning her: "A sword shall pierce through

strictly comparable to the resurrection and ascension of Christ. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven by his own power. She was raised from the dead and exalted to heaven by the power of her Son. This is reflected in the verse in the Song of Songs: 'Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, *leaning upon her Beloved?*'⁹ What the doctrine of the Blessed Virgin's corporal Assumption means is that the resurrection of the body, which for us will take place at the last day, was in her case anticipated.¹⁰ This is the belief of the majority of Christians throughout the world.¹¹

According to Blunt's *Dictionary of Doctrinal and Historical*

thine own soul, that thoughts out of many hearts may be revealed" (Lk 2:35). On the other hand, John says in the Revelation that the dragon hastened against the woman that brought forth the man-child, and there were given her wings of an eagle and she was taken into the wilderness that the dragon might not take her. (Rev 12:13, 14). This may perhaps be fulfilled in Mary, but I have come to no decision at all about this. I do not say that she remained without dying; nor do I strongly maintain that she died.' (*Adv. Haer.*, III. ii. 78, 11; Migne, PG, xlii. 716.) 9 8:5.

10 Cf. Bossuet: 'Though God has fixed upon some particular moment for the general resurrection of the dead, he may yet be compelled for special reasons to anticipate that time in favour of the Blessed Virgin.' (F. M. Capes, *Bossuet on Devotion to the Blessed Virgin*, p. 141.)

11 'In the Orthodox Church there is no dogmatic definition concerning the corporal Assumption of the Mother of God, though it is a belief shared by all Orthodox Christians and finds expression in her liturgical worship. . . . For Orthodox Christians it is fitting that the most holy Bearer of God, full of grace as she was, should be the first fruit of her Son's redemptive work and share in his resurrection.' (*Leaflets on Orthodoxy*, edit. by Archimandrite Denis Chambault, no. 6, Paris, November 1961, p. 6.) Cf. J. N. W. B. Robertson, op. cit., pp. 32 f., 35 f.; E. J. Kimmel, op. cit., pp. 353 f., 356 f.: 'Our Lord Jesus Christ leaveth his throne, where he sitteth at the right hand of the majesty of the Father, and cometh and traverseth all the heavens, that he may be ready to meet this great personage, this great Queen, this great Empress, the Panagia, our Lady, his own Mother. Therefore, all the heavenly Powers that accompany him ask, as saith the wise Solomon in the Song of Songs, chap. 8: "Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness now resplendent and leaning upon her kinsman?" That is, "Who is this that cometh up from this visible world, so beautiful and fair, having such influence with our King, and who is to her as a kinsman?" And so saying and asking, they adore the King and the Queen.' 'What is it that can be intended by a great sign in heaven [Apoc 12:1], where God dwelleth, and the holy Powers are present? It is none other than the Panagia, who was a great sign upon the earth, since she begat God incarnate, and, in begetting, remained undefiled and a virgin, and is spoken of as a sign in heaven. Because she ascended with her body into heaven; for although she left that immaculate tabernacle of hers in the tomb, yet after three days, she was translated into heaven with her body, as Christ also was taken up. For why? Because she hath great authority even over the heavenly Powers themselves. She is a sign, because she hath the moon under her feet, that is, is not forgetful of the Church which is in the world, which hath its light from the sun. She is a sign, because she hath the twelve stars for a crown upon her head, [that is] the twelve Apostles. But, above all, because she is clothed with the sun, to signify that there is no distance between her and God, for God sustaineth her with his arms.'

Theology (1870), which may be taken as typically representative of the best Tractarian teaching,

the idea of the Blessed Virgin's Assumption rests on no historical basis, there being no record of any value respecting the circumstances of her death, much less of any that may have followed after her death. . . . On the other hand, those who do not feel themselves bound strictly by historical evidence in such a case as this, will find little difficulty in believing that the tradition represents a truth. It is certain that the bodies of some of the holy dead have already risen, for one of the many marvellous circumstances attending Our Lord's death was that 'the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many'.¹² Thus there is no *a priori* difficulty in the way of supposing that the body of St Mary arose from the grave shortly after death: and, indeed, if such a resurrection would have ministered to the glory of her risen and ascended Son (as the resurrection of the other saints apparently did), it seems as probable in her case as in that of others. Apart from the historical difficulty, it would 'also seem very fitting that the holy body which was the vehicle of so mighty an event as the Incarnation of God should be preserved from the corruption of the grave; and should be at once received into that blessed place where he who had taken his Manhood of its substance had himself gone, in that Manhood, to dwell. From a purely historical point of view, therefore, there is no evidence for the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and the traditional evidence for it is not strong; but on *a priori* grounds there is no valid objection to a belief in it. The exaggeration of such a 'pious belief' into a dogmatic article of the faith would be unwarrantable: and much exaggeration and credulity have undoubtedly surrounded the observance of the festival.¹³

It is indeed true that apocryphal legends were in early times associated with Mary's death, burial and resurrection, but as Thomas Mozley pointed out in his *Reminiscences of Oriel College and the Oxford Movement* (1882), the belief was never founded on the story of the Assumption. 'The story was founded on the belief, and testifies to the fact of that belief. The belief which was universal required a defined shape, and that shape at length

¹² Mat 27:52, 53.

¹³ Op. cit., p. 55 f.

it found.'¹⁴ The same author, 'who was a shrewd observer of religious thought, though he did not profess to be a trained theologian',¹⁵ wrote:

What became of the household of Nazareth, when death finally released it from its earthly ties? For thirty years was Jesus living there, in the completest obedience, and in the most loving interchange of kindnesses, and even benefits. It was a real and true companionship. It was an actual family. Jesus was no shadow. . . . He was not acting the part of a son. . . . The love of Mary and of Joseph could not be bound by conditions of space or time. We may think it a terrible presumption to place Mary, and Joseph the carpenter . . . near the throne of the Universe. But it would be a far more terrible presumption to place them anywhere else. . . . Is there any one positive conception of the present state of Joseph and Mary so natural and so reasonable as that they are now with Christ, and where he is, at the right hand of the Father?¹⁶

Bishop Cosin cited the account of the Assumption as set forth in the lessons for the second nocturn on the fourth day within the octave of the feast in the *Breviarum Romanum*:

It hath been received [they say] from ancient tradition, that when the Blessed Virgin was ready to die, all the holy apostles, who were at that time dispersed from one another to preach the Gospel over the whole world, being suddenly taken up, and in a moment carried through the air, met all at once in the city of Jerusalem. Where, finding the Virgin Mary near upon the point to depart out of this life, they saw a multitude of heavenly angels melodiously singing about her; and at the same instant the Blessed Virgin in that glorious manner delivered up her soul into the hands of God: her body (of which her Son Christ, the Son of God, had been born) was forthwith carried out in a strange and

¹⁴ Op. cit., vol. ii, p. 368. Although the apocryphal stories do not form the basis for belief in the Assumption, and provide no certain argument for the truth of the doctrine, their antiquity is an indication of an early tradition that the end of our Lady's life on earth was unusual, and that her body was saved from corruption. 'Of the early stories of the Assumption it may be said that all sought to supply the known fact with unknown details. The faithful believed that Mary is body and soul in glory. Writers set to work to guess the rest of the story. Some may have made bad or even wild guesses. Others may have made good guesses. We do not know. All we know is that none of them is part of the truth revealed by God.' (J. C. Heenan, *The Dogma of the Assumption*, p. 9.)

¹⁵ A. T. Wirgman, *The Blessed Virgin and all the Company of Heaven*, p. 199.

¹⁶ Op. cit., vol. ii, pp. 355 ff.

ineffable manner (the angels and the apostles together following it with sacred hymns), and laid in a sepulchre at Gethsemane; where the choir of heaven continued their songs of melody three whole days together without ceasing. But after these three days, when the angels left off singing, St Thomas came (who had not been there before), and being desirous to see and adore that holy body, which had brought Christ into the world, the rest of the apostles went and opened the sepulchre, wherein they found no body remaining; only the linen clothes, wherein it had been wrapped, were left behind, which sent forth a marvellous sweet odour; and thereupon they closed up the sepulchre again, being astonished at the miracle, and concluding among themselves, that he who was the King of glory and had taken flesh of that pure and uncorrupted body, which he had hitherto preserved in an entire and perpetual estate of virginity, had now also been pleased to preserve it from further corruption in the grave, from whence, before the general day of resurrection, he had taken it up to heaven and translated it unto eternal felicity.¹⁷

Although belief in our Lady's Assumption does not rest on this nor on any other traditional account, it could hardly be maintained that there is anything in this one, which is known as the Euthymian story, that could be regarded as unworthy of our Lord's Mother. Nevertheless, the Fathers, when they affirm their belief in the Assumption, do not base it upon the apocryphal stories, but upon deductions from what has been revealed concerning Mary's unique position as Mother of God.¹⁸

Thus St Germanus of Constantinople (d. 733) writes:

Thy virgin body is wholly sacred, wholly pure, wholly the dwelling-place of God, so that therefore it is thereafter not liable

¹⁷ Op. cit., p. 204 f; cf. PG, xcvi. 748. 749.

¹⁸ On the other hand, it is clear that what St Gregory of Tours (c. 540-594) narrates about our Lady's death and Assumption into heaven is influenced by one of the apocryphal accounts: 'When blessed Mary had completed the course of this life and was now called from the world, all the apostles were gathered together from various regions at her house. And when they heard that she was to be taken up from the world, they kept watch together with her. And behold the Lord Jesus came with his angels, and, receiving her soul, entrusted it to Michael the archangel, and then withdrew. At daybreak the apostles took her body with the bier, placed it in a tomb, and watched over it, waiting for the coming of the Lord. And behold the Lord came to them again, and commanded the holy body to be taken up and borne in a cloud into Paradise, where, reunited to the soul, and rejoicing with his elect, it enjoys the never-ending good things of eternity.' (*De Gloria Martyrum*, 4; PL, lxxi. 708.) Cf. T. Ruinart's footnote; Migne, loc. cit.: *Haec porro, quae de morte*

to dissolution into dust. While remaining human it is carried up to the height of immortal life, living and exceeding glorious, participating unceasingly in the perfection of life, inasmuch as it was not possible that the vessel which had received God, the living temple of the all-holy Divinity of the Only-begotten, should be held fast in the confinement of death.¹⁹

St Andrew of Crete (d. 740) expresses himself as follows:

It was a sight truly new and beyond thinking; a woman surpassing the nature of the heavens in her purity, appearing in the innermost sanctuary of heaven; a virgin exalted above the nature of the Seraphim by the wonder of her divine motherhood, drawing near to the primal nature, God the Maker of all things; a mother who had given birth to life itself, bringing the course of her life to a completion rivalling her maternity; a wonder worthy of God and of our faith.²⁰

St John of Damascus (d. 749) says in his second sermon on the Assumption:

The bosom of the earth was no fitting receptacle for the Lord's dwelling place, the living source of cleansing water, the corn of heavenly bread, the sacred vine of divine wine, the evergreen and fruitful olive-branch of God's mercy. And just as the all-holy body of God's Son, which was taken from her, rose from the dead on the third day, it followed that she should be snatched from the tomb, that the mother should be united to her Son: and as he had come down to her, so she should be raised up to him, into the more perfect dwelling-place, heaven itself. It was meet that she, who had sheltered God the Word in her own womb, should inhabit the tabernacles of her Son. And as Our Lord said it behoved him to be concerned with his Father's business, so it behoved his mother that she should dwell in the courts of her Son, in the house of the Lord, and in the courts of the house of our God. . . . It was fitting that the body of her, who preserved her virginity unsullied in her motherhood, should be kept from corruption even after death. She who nursed her Creator as an infant at her breast, had a right to be in the divine tabernacles. The place of the bride whom the Father had espoused, was in the heavenly

beatissimae Virginis ejusque circumstantiis narrat hic Gregorius, procul dubio hausit ex Pseudo Melitonis Sardensium episcopi libro de Transitu beatae Mariae, inter apocryphos a Gelasio papa recensito.

19 *In Dormitionem B. Mariae*, i; PG, xcvi. 345.

20 *In Dormitionem S. Mariae*, ii; PG, xcvi. 1081.

courts. It was fitting that she who saw her Son die on the cross, and received in her heart the sword of pain which she had not felt in child-birth, should gaze upon Him seated next to the Father.²¹

In his first sermon on the same subject he writes:

O how does the source of life pass through death to life? O how can she obey the law of nature, who, in conceiving, surpasses the boundaries of nature? How is her spotless body made subject to death? In order to be clothed with immortality she must first put off mortality, since the Lord of nature did not reject the penalty of death. She dies according to the flesh, destroys death by death, and through corruption gains incorruption, and makes her death the source of resurrection. . . . What, then, shall we call this mystery of thine? Death? Thy blessed soul is naturally parted from thy blissful and undefiled body, and the body is delivered to the grave, yet it does not endure in death, nor is it the prey of corruption. The body of her, whose virginity remained unspotted in child-birth, was preserved in its incorruption, and was taken to a better, diviner place, where death is not, but eternal life. Just as the glorious sun may be hidden momentarily by the opaque moon, it shows still though covered, and its rays illumine the darkness since light belongs to its essence. It has in itself a perpetual source of light, or rather it is the source of light, as God created it. So art thou the perennial source of true light, the treasury of life itself, the richness of grace, the cause and medium of all our goods. And if for a time thou art hidden by the death of the body, without speaking, thou art our light, life-giving ambrosia, true happiness, a sea of grace, a fountain of healing and of perpetual blessing. Thou art as a fruitful tree in the forest, and thy fruit is sweet in the mouth of the faithful. Therefore I will not call thy sacred transformation death, but rest or going home, and it is more truly a going home.²²

Similar arguments drawn from the fitness of things are put forward by an anonymous eighth- or ninth-century author who is concealed under the name of St Augustine:

What, then, is to be said about Mary's death, what about her Assumption, concerning which divine Scripture is silent, except that we must endeavour to find out by reasoning what is in agree-

²¹ Op. cit., 14; PG, xcvi. 740, 741; M. H. Allies, *St John Damascene on Holy Images, followed by Three Sermons on the Assumption*, p. 191 f.

²² Op. cit., 10; PG, xcvi. 713, 716; M. H. Allies, op. cit., pp. 163 ff.

ment with the truth? . . . Bearing in mind man's condition, we are not afraid to say that she underwent that temporal death which her Son, who is both God and Man, in accordance with man's lot, certainly endured. . . . What, then, if . . . we say that she underwent the death which is man's lot, and yet was not held by its chains, she through whom God willed to be born, and to share in the substance of flesh; will this be impious? We know that Jesus can do all things. . . . I cannot bring myself to think that the most sacred body, from which Christ took flesh, . . . was given over to be the food of worms. If any one shall choose to gainsay this, since he would not wish to say that Christ could not do it, let him produce arguments to show that it would not be fitting that he should will it, and therefore that it was not done. And if he shall make it clear that he truly knows the mind of God in regard to this, I will begin to take from him opinions which otherwise I have not ventured to entertain. . . . If, then, what I have written is true, I give thanks to thee, O Christ, that I was unable to bring myself to suppose anything of thy holy Virgin Mother but what seemed dutiful and proper. If, then, I have spoken as I ought to have done, approve, O Christ, I beseech, thou and thine: but if as I ought not to have done, pardon me, thou and thine.²³

It was this treatise of the Pseudo-Augustine that served to reassure those who had been disturbed by the hesitation of the Pseudo-Jerome, who had written as follows:

Many of ours are doubtful whether she was assumed together with her body, or whether she departed without her body. But it is not known in what manner, or at what time, or by what persons her most holy body was removed thence, or where it was taken, or whether it rose again; although some would like to add that she is already risen, and with Christ is clothed with a blessed immortality in heaven. . . . It is better, however, that we should leave the whole matter to God, to whom nothing is impossible, than that we should want to define rashly on our own authority something that we cannot prove. . . . Nor, since nothing is impossible to God, do we deny that this happened in the case of the Blessed Virgin Mary, although, for reasons of caution, without prejudice to faith, it would be more becoming to hold it as a pious opinion, than to define unadvisedly what one may be ignorant of without danger.²⁴

²³ *De Assumptione B. V. Virginis*, 2, 4, 6, 9; PL, xl. 1144, 1145, 1146, 1148.

²⁴ *Epistola ix, ad Paulam et Eustochium; de Assumpt. B. Mariae*, 2; PL, xxx. 123, 124. The author of a sermon which was at one time ascribed to St Augustine, seems to

We find expressed both in St John of Damascus and in the Pseudo-Augustine the principle that was later embodied in the famous dictum attributed to Duns Scotus in his vindication of the Immaculate Conception: *Potuit, deuit, ergo fecit*—‘God could, it was seemly, therefore he did.’²⁵ These writers argue by the method of converging probabilities. ‘One of their

have been familiar with this letter of the Pseudo-Jerome. ‘Therefore we say this, brethren,’ he writes, ‘that as the Church of Christ has already recognized as in accordance with custom, it is handed down that the Virgin Mary was on this day assumed into heaven. But in what manner she passed hence to the supernal realms, no Catholic history narrates. . . . It remains therefore that man should not falsely pretend to be known what God has willed to remain hidden. But the true opinion about her Assumption is shown to be this, that, using the words of the Apostle, whether in the body or out of the body we know not (2 Cor 12:2), we believe that she was assumed above the angels.’ (*Sermo* ccviii. 2, 3; PL, xxxix. 2130.) Similarly, the ninth-century martyrologist Ado of Vienne declares: ‘The whole Church celebrates her falling asleep on the fifteenth of August. Her sacred body is not found on earth. . . . Nevertheless devout Mother Church, which in its observances takes its stand upon the soundest foundation of faith, so keeps with joy her venerable memory, that it does not doubt that she passed over according to the flesh. But as to where that venerable temple of the Holy Ghost, that is, the flesh of that most blessed Virgin Mary, has by God’s will and counsel been hidden, the Church in its sobriety has chosen to remain in pious ignorance rather than hold and teach anything frivolous and apocryphal.’ (PL, cxxiii. 202.) This passage was incorporated by Usuard in his *Martyrologium*, which is the basis of the current Roman Martyrology: *Dormitio sanctae Dei genetricis Mariae, cujus sacratissimum corpus etsi non invenitur super terram, tamen pia mater Ecclesia venerabilem ejus memoriam sic festivam agit, ut pro conditione carnis, eam migrasse non dubitet. Quo autem illud venerabile Spiritus Domini templum nutu et consilio divino occultatum sit, plus elegit sobrietas Ecclesiae cum pietate nescire, quam aliquid frivolum et apocryphum inde tenendo docere.* (PL, cxxiv. 365.) Cf. Pseudo-Ildefonsus, *Sermo vi; de Assumpt. B. Mariae: Nec sane illud omittere debemus, quod multi pietatis studio libentissime amplectuntur: eam hodierno die a filio suo Domino Jesu Christo ad coeli corporaliter sublevatam palatia. Quod licet pium sit credere, a nobis tamen non debet affirmari, ne videamur dubia pro certis recipere.* (PL, xcvi. 266, 267.) Notker Balbulus, a contemporary of Usuard, observes that there is disagreement among the most learned on these matters: *De quibus quia doctissimi tractatores videntur inter se dissidere, non est meum in tam brevi opusculo definire.* (PL, cxxxi. 1142.) It was the attempt to give an historical basis to a belief which is essentially theological that led to this instilling of hesitations and doubts into the minds of even the most devout. But Mary’s corporal Assumption is not really a matter of history at all, for it is concerned not so much with the taking of her body from earth, as with her entry body and soul into heaven, which is something about which history cannot tell us anything.

25 Cf. Eadmer, *De Concept. B. Mariae*: *Potuit plane, et voluit; si igitur voluit, fecit.* (PL, clix. 305.) Argumentation based on this principle is criticized by the authors of *The Assumption of Our Lady and Catholic Theology*: ‘The theologian demonstrates first that a certain supposition is compatible with all the truths of Christian revelation, and secondly that it would seem to accord appropriately with the divine will, and from this he proceeds to conclude that what was supposed is in fact the case. The special weakness of this form of argument lies in the fact that the second step would require a certain insight into the divine understanding, a certain ability to determine the unsearchable ways of God. Failing such a special revelation, the theologian is reduced to telling us that God has probably done what he, the theologian, thinks God ought to have done.’ (R. Winch and V. Bennett, op. cit., p. 69 f.)

reasons alone would as a rule only give rise to probability. As other reasons are added, reasons which point in the same direction, one confirming the weak points of another, there comes a stage when so many converging probabilities pointing to one conclusion generate an absolute conviction.²⁶ This is the way in which people usually scale the heights of truth. Formal argument is introduced only to justify to others a position which has been reached by reasoning which is implicit and elusive. The way in which this informal reasoning proceeds is depicted in a well-known passage of Newman's:

The mind ranges to and fro, and spreads out, and advances forward with a quickness which has become a proverb, and a subtlety and versatility which baffle investigation. It passes on from point to point, gaining one by some indication; another on a probability; then availing itself of an association; then falling back on some received law; next seizing on testimony; then committing itself to some popular impression, or some inward instinct, or some obscure memory; and thus it makes progress not unlike a clamberer on a steep cliff, who, by quick eye, prompt hand, and firm foot, ascends how he knows not himself, by personal endowments and by practice, rather than by rule, leaving no track behind him, and unable to teach another.²⁷

For Roman Catholics it has been defined as a divinely revealed dogma that 'Mary, when the course of her earthly life was run, was assumed to heavenly glory in body and soul'.²⁸ Anglicans cannot regard it as an article of the faith, because it does not satisfy the criterion of being capable of being proved by Holy Scripture, which 'containeth all things necessary to salvation'.²⁹ The wise thing to do is to look upon it as one of

26 H. F. Davis, 'Our Lady's Assumption', in *Mother of the Redeemer*, Lectures of Maynooth Union Summer School, 29 June to 3 July 1958, edit. by K. McNamara, p. 202.

27 *Oxford University Sermons*, 3rd edit., p. 257.

28 *Auctoritate Domini Nostri Jesu Christi, Beatorum Apostolorum Petri et Pauli ac Nostra pronuntiamus, declaramus et definimus divinitus revelatum dogma esse: Immaculatam Deiparam semper Virginem Mariam, expleto terrestris vitae cursu, fuisse corpore et anima ad caelestem gloriam assumptam.* (Apostolic Constitution *Munificentissimus Deus*; *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. xlii, p. 770.)

29 Article vi. Cf. *Munificentissimus Deus*: 'Again and again there appear theologians and sacred orators who, following in the steps of the holy Fathers, in order to illustrate their belief in the Assumption, make use of a certain freedom in applying incidents and words borrowed from the Sacred Scriptures. Thus, to recall but a few quotations which are more often used in reference to this subject, there are some

the highly probable secondary truths of our religion, having a due place in Christian devotion, in subordination to those truths that are primary.

Appendix

The Woman of Revelation 12

Hippolytus, *De Christo et Antichristo*, 61: Τὴν μὲν οὖν γυναῖκα τὴν περιβεβλημένην τὸν ἥλιον, σαφέστατα τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν ἐδήλωσεν ἐνδεδυμένην τὸν Λόγον τὸν Πατρῶν ὑπὲρ ἥλιον λάμποντα. . . . οὐ παύσεται ἡ Ἐκκλησία γεννώσα ἐκ καρδίας τὸν Λόγον, τὸν ἐν κόσμῳ ὑπὸ ἀπίστων διωκόμενον. . . . τὸν ἄρρενα καὶ τέλειον Χριστὸν παῖδα Θεοῦ, Θεὸν καὶ ἄνθρωπον καταγγελλόμενον, ἀεὶ τίκτουςα ἡ Ἐκκλησία, διδάσκει πάντα τὰ ἔθνη. (PG, x, 780, 781).

Pseudo-Augustine, *De Symbolo ad Catechumenos*, iv. 1: *Mulierem illam virginem Mariam significasse, quae caput nostrum integra integrum peperit, quae etiam ipsa figuram in se sanctae Ecclesiae demonstravit: ut quomodo filium pariens virgo permansit, ita et haec omni tempore membra ejus pariat, virginitatem non amittat.* (PL, xl. 661.)

Bede, *Explan. Apocal.*, ii. 12: *Ecclesia Christi lumine cincta, gloriam calcat temporalem: Orietur, inquit, in diebus ejus justitia,*

who cite the words of the Psalmist: "Arise, O Lord, into thy resting place: thou and the ark which thou hast sanctified" (Ps. cxxxix [cxxxii]. 8). In the ark of the covenant, made of incorruptible wood and placed in the temple of God, they perceive an image of the most pure body of the Virgin Mary, preserved immune from all corruption of the tomb and carried up to such great glory in heaven. In the same way, when treating of this subject, they describe the Queen entering triumphantly into the royal court of heaven and taking her seat at the right hand of the Divine Redeemer (Ps. xlv [xlv]. 10, 14-16). Again, they cite the Spouse of the Canticles 'that goeth up by the desert, as a pillar of smoke, of aromatical spices, of myrrh, and frankincense' to be adorned with a crown (Cant. iii. 6; cf. iv. 8; vi. 9). These they put forward as images of that heavenly Queen and heavenly Spouse, who together with the Divine Bridegroom is carried up to the court of heaven. Moreover, the Scholastic doctors have seen the Assumption of the Virgin Mother of God signified not only in various figures of the Old Testament, but also in the woman clothed with the sun, whom the Apostle John contemplated in the isle of Patmos (Apoc. xii. 1 ff.). Again, from the passages of the New Testament they put forward for particularly careful consideration the words: 'Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women' (Lk i. 28), since they perceived in the mystery of the Assumption the complement of that fullness of grace bestowed on the Blessed Virgin, and a singular benediction countering Eve's malediction.' (*Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, vol. xlii, p. 762 f.)

et abundantia pacis donec extollatur *vel* interficiatur luna (Psal. lxxi). *Id est, abundantia pacis in tantum crescet, donec omnem mutabilitatem mortalitatis absumet, cum novissima inimica destruetur mors* (1 Cor 15). (PL, xciii. 165, 166.)

Alcuin, *Comment. in Apocal.*, v. 12: *Mulier amicta sole beata virgo Maria est, obumbrata Altissimi virtute, in qua etiam genus, id est Ecclesia, intelligitur; quae non propter mollitiem mulier dicitur, sed quia novos quotidie populos parit, ex quibus generale Christi corpus conformatur. Ecclesia itaque sole amicta est, juxta illud: Quotquot in Christo baptizati estis, Christum induistis* (Gal 3: 27). *Christus est enim sol justitiae, et candor lucis aeternae* (Sap. vii. 26). (PL, c. 1152.)

Haymo of Halberstadt, *Expos. in Apocal.*, iii. 12: *Istud est signum de quo admonitus est Achaz, ut peteret signum a Deo in profundum inferni, sive in excelsum supra. Sed cum ille diceret, Non petam, et non tentabo Dominum, conversus propheta ad domum David, dixit: Propter hoc dicit Dominus: Ecce dabo vobis signum: Ecce virgo concipiet et pariet filium. Magnum quippe fuit signum, quando virgo concepit et peperit, et post partum virgo permansit. Et in caelo hoc factum est, id est in Ecclesia, cujus et mater Domini membrum erat. . . . Ipsa autem beata Dei genetrix in hoc loco personam gerit Ecclesiae. Neque enim omnia quae hic narrantur, juxta litteram beatæ Virginis specialiter congruere possunt, sed electorum Ecclesiae, secundum mysticam narrationem generaliter conveniunt, in qua quotidie fit hoc signum, quia quotidie concipitur in ea Christus et nascitur.* (PL, cxvii. 1080, 1081.)

Rupert of Deutz, *Comment. in Apocal.*, vii. 12: *Mulier illa sole amicta, signum erat Ecclesiae totius, cujus beata virgo Maria portio maxima, portio est optima pro felicitate uteri proprii.* (PL, clxix. 1043.)

Pius X, *Encyclical Ad Diem*, 2 Feb. 1904: *Nullus autem ignorat, mulierem illam, Virginem Mariam significasse, quae caput nostrum integra peperit. Sequitur porro Apostolus: Et in utero habens, clamabat parturiens, et cruciabatur ut pariat* (Apoc 12:2). *Vidit igitur Joannes sanctissimam Dei Matrem aeterna jam beatitudine fruentem, et tamen ex arcano quodam partu laborantem. Quonam autem partu? Nostrum plane, qui exilio adhuc detenti, ad perfectam Dei caritatem sempiternamque felicitatem gignendi adhuc sumus. Pariensis vero labor studium atque amorem indicat, quo Virgo, in caelesti sede, vigilat assidueque prece contendit ut electorum numerus expleatur.* (*Acta Sanctae Sedis*, vol. xxxvi, p. 458 f.)

C. C. Martindale, S.J., 'The Apocalypse', in *A Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture*, 968 j, k: 'Who is this Woman? Clearly, the Mother of the Messiah (2:5), but also of a vast posterity (17) which endures to the end of time. She is, then, as symbolic as the Dragon, and indeed John says so (1:3), and is comparable with the "Jerusalem on high, the Mother of us all" (Gal 4:26). . . . The mass of tradition sees in the Woman *both* the Synagogue and the Church: there is no break, in God's eyes, between them. . . . This does not exclude John's having seen our Lady in this Woman—how could he *not*? Having spent so long in her company, he *could* not have written of the Mother of the Messiah without being conscious of her. . . . And the moment he thinks of the "primeval serpent" he *must* have remembered Eve; so the Woman becomes the Second Eve, and we have the series—the "Mother of the Messiah": the Universal Eve: Jerusalem and the People: the Church and Mary. The *immediate* appearance of Mary as the Second Eve in patristic literature must surely be due in part to this passage.'

VII

Towards an Evangelical Reappraisal

John de Satgé

I

IT is notoriously hard to define an evangelical. As the present writer understands it, evangelicalism is not so much a series of doctrines or theological positions as a set of priorities for interpreting the historic catholic faith. The evangelical is first and foremost a member of the Church and his evangelicalism describes how his membership of the Church is realized. He is a catholic because he shares in the faith of his forebears as it has been handed on in the formularies and worship of the Church; he is an evangelical in his emphasis on the practical authority of the Bible and in his insistence on the need for personal conviction, decision and commitment to accompany sacramental obedience. This priority gives rise to his emphasis on the duty of private Bible-study, on justification through the unmerited grace of God and on the responsible priesthood of the whole People of God; as it does also to his characteristic attitudes towards separated Christians, for he is quick to recognize a community of experience with evangelicals of other denominations.

The Anglican evangelical has a strong sense of the continuity of the Church. As he looks back over the record of Christian history he finds particular affinity with those whose emphases were similar to his own: with the Reformers, with the Puritans, with the Evangelicals of the eighteenth century. He is happy when he finds kindred spirits among Roman Catholics, but essentially his sympathies lie with the Protestants; in the immortal terms of *1066 And All That*, he reckons the Reformation to have been A Good Thing.

It is not surprising therefore to find that evangelicals are

disposed to agree with the Reformation rejection of the medieval Marian cultus; and that they look with disfavour upon the attempts of Anglo-Catholics and of some Protestants to re-introduce Marian doctrines and piety into the practice of the faithful.

II

Such opposition is based upon four particular convictions: that Marian devotion is not grounded in the Scriptures; that dogmatically it is a distortion; that religiously it is dangerous; and that it is a phenomenon best explained in terms of comparative religion and of psychology.

The evangelical rejects Marian cultus first and foremost because it is not grounded in the Scriptures. He finds of course that there are several references to Mary in the New Testament; but he notices that all the incidents where she is prominent are concerned with her part as mother of the incarnate Lord—indeed most of them are directly connected with his conception and birth.

Source criticism reduces the Synoptic references to the Lord's mother outside the birth and infancy narratives to two. One of these is not important for our present purpose—the people of Nazareth recognize that Jesus is the son of Mary.¹ The other reference is Mk 3:31–35.² St John gives us the account of the marriage feast at Cana,³ and alone of the Evangelists it is he who tells us that Mary was standing by the Cross.⁴ Outside the Gospels there is only one specific mention of Mary: at Acts 1:14, which tells us that she, together with the Lord's brethren, was among the faithful company in the Upper Room before Pentecost. And St Paul has one oblique reference in Gal 4:4.

Evangelicals duly take note of these references. They have no wish to underrate them, but they are not convinced that there is here anything like an adequate foundation for the

¹ (Mk 6:3; cp. Mat 13:55). The Lucan equivalent is given a different context and in Lk 4:22 Jesus is described as Joseph's son; there is a similar recognition of his parentage in Jn 6:42.

² Cp. Lk 8:19–21, Mat 12:46–50.

³ Jn 2:1–11, esp. verses 3–5.

⁴ Jn 19:20.

tremendous superstructure of Roman and Orthodox mariology; and they find the typological skill with which Tradition has augmented them more ingenious than convincing.

Dogmatically the evangelical sees Marian development as a distortion. On scriptural grounds he accepts the Virgin Birth of our Lord. But he does not see that Immaculate Conception or Assumption have any more warrant from the implications of the Incarnation than they have from the Scriptures. He does not feel strongly about the perpetual virginity of Mary and he regards the status of the 'brethren of the Lord' as a question to be decided on exegetical rather than on dogmatic grounds. He tends to reject out of hand any suggestion of Mary as Co-Redeemer.

It would be a mistake to suppose that this attitude is purely negative. The evangelical is concerned positively to assert the unique glory of the incarnate Son of God and he believes that Marian developments detract from this. He has no wish to dishonour the Lord's mother; but in order to honour her Son he sets his face against all attempts to remove her from the realm of ordinary human beings. In the Scripture Mary has a unique position, but an obscure one. The evangelical believes that he is adding his mite of praise to her whom all generations should call blessed by leaving her in a like obscurity; the very publicity of 'catholic' doctrine and devotion alters the proportions of faith and actually dishonours her in the process by making of her something the Scriptures do not.

It is important to take seriously the positive honour done to the Lord's mother in the evangelical tradition. Because the evangelical takes the record of Scripture seriously he notes that when the crowd pointed out to Jesus that his mother and his brethren were looking for him, Jesus answered by saying of those who were intent upon his teaching, 'Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother and sister and mother.' That is how St Mark puts it.⁵ But the evangelical also notices that St Luke's version of the Lord's answer 'My mother and my brethren are those who hear the word of God and do it', is strikingly similar to what he has already said of Mary, who 'kept all these things and pondered them in her heart.'⁶ It is by taking together

5 3:31-35.

6 Lk 2:19.

passages such as these⁷ that the evangelical finds a truly scriptural appreciation of Mary.

The evangelical believes that all Marian cultus is religiously dangerous. He is of course aware of the theologians' distinction between Latria and Hyperdulia, but he is not convinced that it provides in practice a safeguard against idolatry. He cannot but be impressed by what he sees in Roman churches: the blaze of candles throwing into relief shadowy figures praying before the statue of our Lady while our Lord in the Blessed Sacrament is by comparison deserted. Whatever theologians may say, the evangelical believes that the ordinary modern catholic is in fact more Marian than Christian.

Evangelicals take this very seriously. If Christ is the all-sufficient Saviour, the one mediator between God and man,⁸ what can there be but apostasy in the recourse to other mediators? It is from the central conviction of the perfect salvation God has provided in Christ that evangelical opposition to the invocation of Mary springs. The evangelical cannot tolerate any extension of that personal relationship with God through Christ to any other person, not even to the mother of the incarnate Lord.

Fourthly, the evangelical has a strong suspicion that the deepest roots of the Marian cultus are not to be found in the Christian tradition at all. The religious history of mankind shows a recurring tendency to worship a mother-goddess. Three factors in particular suggest that the cult of Mary may be an intrusion into Christianity from the dark realms of natural religion. First, it seems that historically the earliest traces of Marian devotion seem to come from Christian circles to some extent at least tainted with syncretizing Gnosticism. The second is the ease with which the devotion becomes associated with local holy places so that the faithful make their prayers to our Lady of a particular shrine. May it not be the case, the evangelical wonders, that what we have here is in reality an older religion, a paganism which has been too lightly baptized into Christ and whose ancient features persist under a thin Christian veil? The third factor is an apparent correlation between Marian devotion and an elevation of chastity to a point of esteem where marriage and sexual intercourse are

7 Cp. Lk 1:38, Jn 2:5.

8 1 Tim 2:5.

depreciated if not reprehended. Is the increasing emphasis on a female object of devotion in some way a form of psychological compensation?

These are some of the considerations which influence the evangelical in his traditional attitude towards Marian doctrine and practice. They all point to one conclusion: that here is a phenomenon which is no true development of faith in the incarnate Lord. It is rather the infiltration into the Church of the attitudes and values of the infidel world. Marian piety is essentially a non-theological factor.

III

This traditional attitude is, I believe, thoroughly unsatisfactory. Progress in the movement towards Christian unity has meant that we can no longer ignore the teaching of Rome and Orthodoxy. We may indeed be obliged to go on opposing their teaching, but we can no longer do so in quite the same way as before. The difference must be in the matter of our standpoint. Up till now, evangelical attitudes towards Mariology have always been attitudes *ab extra*, detached, uninvolved. We were considering something quite apart from ourselves, something with which we had no personal relation. For some years past this position has logically been hard to maintain; but the admission of the Russian Orthodox Church to the World Council of Churches in 1961 has forced the issue out into the open as never before. Whether we like it or not, we are now in a certain relation of explicit Christian fraternity with a large number of people whose devotion to our Lady is an integral part of their faith. On a less official level, Anglicans and Protestants generally are beginning to hold rudimentary dialogue with groups within the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed we may say that the 1960s are being marked by a new awareness of Christian community. Increasingly the fact of being Christians together in a hostile world is more important than the differences between us. Together we go to make up the Christian community.

With community comes responsibility. All Christians are learning as never before what it means to be members one of another; 'and whether one member suffereth, all the members

suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the members rejoice with it.'⁹ It thus follows that we cannot avoid responsibility for one another. If we believe one group of Christians to be in error, we may no longer throw up our hands in horror, rejoicing in our separated purity: 'Lord, I thank thee that we evangelicals are not as these other people are.' We must take our share of the responsibility as we realize that we are all implicated in the one-sided development that falls to the lot of all Christian groups, minority or majority, deprived of the strength that comes from full fellowship. Our basic attitude should rather be 'Lord, have mercy on all us Christian sinners.' When we find ourselves in sharp conflict with another group of Christians, our reaction must include a note of penitence.

Community, responsibility, and penitence: these are the predispositions essential to an evangelical re-appraisal of the deep differences that exist over the honour due to the mother of Christ. It is important, however, not to lapse into sentimentality. The stern demands of truth and integrity remain. Penitence does not necessarily imply that we have been wrong in our conclusions; but it does demand that we should go into disputed matters afresh with supple and humble intelligence. We must desist from the protestations of our own rightness and make the attempt to grasp sympathetically as well as critically those interpretations of historical development which we find antipathetic. In a word, penitence demands that we lay ourselves open to the costly business of dialogue.

The demands of dialogue are formidable, and we will not advance to it from controversy unless we are devoted not only to the cause of truth and unity, but also to that of holiness and of prayer. Dialogue demands a degree of calmness, balance, and dispassionate concern which is superhuman. We are weighed down by the negative inheritance of centuries; attitudes of mind rooted deep in the collective historical piety of evangelicalism, ambiguities of conviction and self-justification whose assessment is bound to be agonizing. For this task we need the grace that can come only to those whose hearts have found their rest in Christ and who are open to receive His strength. Our theological differences must be examined in

obedience to the overriding prayer 'Thy will be done'; we will not be graced with that love which makes genuine dialogue possible until we have brought those whom we differ from most acutely within the orbit of our continual prayer.

IV

Granted the existence of such preconditions for dialogue: at what points have those of us to whom all Marian cultus is alien to re-examine ourselves? What follows is no more than a preliminary sketch; but I hope it may initiate a debate which others will carry forward to more precise conclusions. It should be emphasized that what is said is entirely personal to the writer and does not claim to represent the views of any group or other individuals. It will be convenient to discuss the question according to the four categories of evangelical objection previously used.

First, the Scriptural. 'Behold,' the Virgin is reported to have said, 'from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.' Has the evangelical tradition in Anglicanism done this with any adequacy? 'He that is mighty has done great things to me and holy is his name.' The 'great things' in question were of course the conception of the Son of God in her womb.

The evangelical has always accepted this. He joins in the *Magnificat* between the lessons at Evening Prayer and he acknowledges Mary's part in the economy of Redemption every time he recites the Creed. Because the Christian gospel is rooted in history, the Conception and Birth of the Lord are of paramount importance, and Mary is perpetually honoured for her part in them. Catholic tradition however emphasizes another element in the Annunciation: Mary's response to the angel, 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.'¹⁰ The Incarnation of the Saviour depended, so it is asserted, upon her freely-given response, upon her willingness for the terrifying strangeness of the unknown with all its possibilities of misunderstanding or worse. It is from this if I judge rightly that the instructed catholic's devotion to our Lady derives: gratitude deepening into affection and, when the awe-inspiring cause of the gratitude is understood, into reverence.

The evangelical is not entirely happy about this. Apart from any difficulties as to historicity, he tends to understand the working of God in the plan of salvation by interpreting St Paul through St Augustine, Luther, and Calvin: to emphasize that strand of biblical teaching which connects Grace very closely with Covenant and Election. He is inclined to see an undue weight placed upon freewill in the catholic devotion, a dangerous affinity with Pelagius.

The matter needs fresh investigation. It is surely foreign to evangelical thought with its insistence on personal conversion to underplay the part of human response. Certainly Mary was a chosen one, the faithful remnant in Israel; but as certainly she had the power to say No. Grace was there, for she was the 'graced one'; was there preveniently, before the moment of decision. But grace could be refused, as Israel had so often refused it. If we deem Mary incapable of refusal, we are then singling her out from among mankind by making her less than human. In the fullness of time God sent forth his Son to be born of a woman, not of a puppet.

Dogmatically the most urgent point for re-appraisal would seem to be the meaning of Mary's motherhood. It is a pity that most Protestant treatments of Mariology have aimed at refuting the distinctive Roman teachings. Historically, these are late developments; and concentration upon them has meant the neglect of more fundamental matters. By contrast, the motherhood of Mary has always held a place in Christian tradition. It is as we have seen asserted in the New Testament; it holds a constant place in the Fathers from Ignatius of Antioch onwards;¹¹ and indeed it is difficult to see how any real doctrine of Incarnation could avoid it.

If we are to avoid a docetic christology, we must insist on the physical reality of the Incarnation; it was not a matter of the divine passing through the human process of birth as through a tube and emerging as God in temporary disguise. Nor must we fall into that opposite christological error that Jesus was an ordinary man who by unique obedience to God was adopted as his Son. On the contrary, we must believe that the Son of God submitted himself to all the stages of growth that human embryology knows. The 'scandal' of the

¹¹ Ign. *Eph.* 18 f. Mary as the Second Eve appears first in Justin *Dial.* 100.

Incarnation demands that we accept some startling words of Dr Mascall: 'I do not think that we can understand either the full meaning of the Incarnation or the unique position held by Mary among all created beings unless we reflect calmly and reverently upon the fact that for nine months Mary carried God incarnate within her as she went about her work.'¹²

The Annunciation and the Birth marked the early decisive stages in a lasting relationship. Motherhood is not an act which ends with parturition; it is an enduring relationship both moral and physical. The Son of God was born a man; as man he 'grew big and strong and full of wisdom';¹³ as man he fulfilled the destiny of the Servant-Messiah, carrying his obedience through to the point of death; as man God raised him from the dead and exalted him to the heavenly places; and as man still, sharing our nature, he intercedes for us. The flesh which he took of the Virgin is flesh still, hers and his, though transfigured, glorified in the Godhead. Since he is still man and became man from Mary, bone of her bone and flesh of her flesh, she is still his mother. Over the consequences of this, Scripture (unless one resorts to typological subtlety) is silent: Tradition has taken over. We are not bound to believe in Immaculate Conception or Assumption, for they are no part of the original deposit of faith whatever their merits as deductions from it. But we are surely bound to believe that if our Lord is still man, Mary is still his mother.

There is perhaps a further consequence of Mary's part in the Incarnation which carries us over into the third realm of evangelical difficulties; though here I confess myself less certain of what conclusions may properly be drawn. If the 'scandalous' reality of the Incarnation means that Mary is still and forever the mother of the Lord, does this imply that she is in some way related to us who are 'in Christ'?

We may conveniently look at this from the angle of Christian solidarity. Christian people are involved in a complex network of relationships. We are caught up into the solidarity of the Covenant: the People of God's own possession, set aside in the holiness of God's own choice, called out from darkness into light, baptized into the regeneration of God's Israel. According

¹² *The Mother of God*, 1949, p. 41.

¹³ Lk 2:40 N.E.B.

to another biblical image, we are baptized into Christ, incorporated into his Body. We have received the spirit of adoption by which we cry *Abba, Father*; we are all that St Paul means by his richly comprehensive 'in Christ'. Or again we are wild shoots grafted into the cultivated olive, we are branches of the one Vine; we are the Bride of Christ. All this luxuriant mixture of scriptural imagery describing the Church of which we form part has one common factor: that there is a solidarity into which we have been assumed; a solidarity whose centre is Christ, the Son of God incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary and made man. Christ is the Second Adam, the New Man, and we are incorporated to form part of his total Humanity. Does this mean that we are adopted into a relationship not only with him but with her from whom he took his flesh? If so, then she is not only his mother; she becomes our mother too.

Clearly those who are in Christ are in some kind of relationship with Mary in that all members of the Body are involved with each other as they are with the Head. So much is implied by two snapshots (if I may phrase it so) of Mary to be found in the New Testament; at Jn 19:27 where at the Cross Jesus commends her to the beloved disciple's keeping; and at Acts 1:14 where she is to be seen in the company of the Church before Pentecost. This general impression is confirmed at a less obvious level of New Testament interpretation. We have already seen how the seeming rebuke of Mk 3:31-35 is modified in its Lukan form to suggest Mary's oneness with true disciples; and the prophecy of Simeon¹⁴ that a sword should pierce her to the heart underlines the reality of her discipleship when it is set beside such a passage as Mk 8:34-38.

But is there more to it than this? All we have shown so far is that Mary must be regarded as being within the Communion of Saints: she is a part of that solidarity which binds us in Christ into one with the Apostles and with the faithful all down the ages. Is there a sense in which our relationship with Mary should be more direct, more articulate, more intimate? Catholic tradition would no doubt point us again for an answer to St John's account of the Crucifixion. 'Jesus saw his mother, with the disciple whom he loved standing beside her. He said to her, "Mother, there is your son;" and to the disciple, "There

¹⁴ Lk 2:35.

is your mother;” and from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.’¹⁵ ‘At the time of the Lord’s death’, Hoskyns commented, ‘a new family is brought into being. If the unity of the Church is symbolized by the seamless robe, the peculiar nature of that unity is indicated here. The Church proceeds from the sacrifice of the Son of God, and the union of the Beloved Disciple and the Mother of the Lord prefigures and foreshadows the Ecclesia of God. Mary, the Mother of the Lord, becomes the mother of the faithful¹⁶ and the Beloved Disciple here seems to denote the ideal Christian convert.’¹⁷ If this exegesis be accepted, its consequences are far-reaching.

The fourth point of evangelical difficulty over all Marian cultus is less easy to discuss owing to the problems in formulating it. We might be able to get further if we expressed it by saying that there is an uncomfortably close connection between attention paid to the Virgin Mother and the widespread human need for a female figure as an object of devotion. Our attitude towards this is bound to be coloured by the way we look upon the religions of the world; whether they reflect the distorted remains of authentic revelation, to be taken up and crucified and resurrected and sanctified in Christ, or whether they are to be wholly destroyed. In fact we have come to an issue which takes us far beyond the scope of this essay, for it is the old battle-ground of *Erōs* and *Agapē*, the familiar controversy as to the status of natural religion. In this controversy evangelicals are by no means all to be found on one side.

V

This essay is a response to the writer’s belief that Christian obedience at the present time demands ecumenical dialogue on the widest scale. The evangelical may no longer confine his interest to those Christians with whom he finds the closest affinity; he must take his place alongside his fellow-Anglicans of other traditions in the increasing opportunities for encounter with Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox. This means

¹⁵ Jn 19:26 f N.E.B.

¹⁶ Cf. Rev 12:5 ff. and see *J.T.S.* April 1920, pp. 210 ff.

¹⁷ E. C. Hoskyns: *The Fourth Gospel*, ed. F. N. Davey, 2nd edn. reprinted 1950, p. 530.

that he will have to re-think matters on which he has inherited a fixed attitude, outstanding among which is the problem of the Blessed Virgin. I have tried to open up certain lines along which such re-thinking might go.

Dialogue of the kind I envisage is bound to make some changes in the set pattern of evangelical attitudes. I do not however believe that the changes will be for the good if they are simply the denial of what we have previously stood for. It is theologically wrong to go back on our history, for that is to deny that the Holy Spirit has been at work there. For this reason I share in the general evangelical disquiet at the tendency of some Anglo-Catholics to take over Roman practices wholesale. All Anglicans stand necessarily in the tradition of the Reformers, and in our assessment and development of their work we should approach them positively. They performed a great service in uncovering the centralities of the faith from the clutter of later accretions, and it is from those same centralities of God and Christ and salvation that we should return as we begin to explore the further mysteries of our inheritance. If evangelicals are to alter their attitude towards catholic devotion to Mary, it is from deeper contemplation of the mysteries of the Person of Christ and of our membership in him that such change will come.

VIII

Popular Devotion to Our Lady

J. C. Stephenson

THEOLOGY must find its expression in the worship and devotional life of the ordinary Christian, for without worship Christianity would be a philosophy and not a religion. Yet the Christian heart can get the better of the Christian head and theologians are often only too conscious that devout words and actions that have grown up around some particular cultus are implying more than they would be prepared to justify from the deposit of faith given to us in the Holy Scriptures and the teachings of the Church. This is particularly true of the cultus which has grown up around the Blessed Virgin Mary.

It should never be forgotten that devotion to the Mother of our Lord belongs to the earliest strata of Christian worship; it is not a late development as has often been implied, indeed it is possible that the prayers of Mary were being invoked in the popular devotions of Christians before the doctrine of the Trinity had been defined. It is part of the family tradition of the Church which feels itself united in Christ and so in a special relationship to his Mother, who is a living reality to Christians. This makes such devotions very much an affair of the heart so that it has always been difficult to control the exuberance of those who feel strongly the bond which exists between child and mother. The American cult of Mother's Day shows that this is not only a problem connected with devotion to our Lady. Because of this there is often a suspicion in Anglican minds that Roman Catholic theologians find themselves forced into the position of trying to justify theological propositions which have grown out of a subjective popular devotion which has been worked into a state of fanaticism by Protestant neglect and abuse of the Blessed Virgin. On the other hand, although Anglican theologians are frequently given to pointing out the

danger of excessive emphasis on the part of Mary in God's scheme of Redemption, they should realize that a far greater danger lies in the suppression of popular devotion to our Lady, for where this has happened experience has shown that our Lord has tended to fall into her place, and while being honoured and glorified as a perfect man, ceases to be worshipped as God. This is why it has often been claimed that devotion to Mary is the safeguard of the divinity of Jesus.

There has come to be a marked difference in the form which this devotion takes in Eastern, as opposed to Western, Christendom. In the Eastern Orthodox Church the main emphasis is placed upon praising and glorifying Mary as the Christ-bearer, while in the West the seeking of a Mother's prayers and the constant repetition of 'Ora pro nobis' has tended to push this consideration into first place.

It has often been pointed out that in the Roman Church there is a great contrast between liturgical and extra-liturgical devotion to our Lady. In the Liturgy there is little in the Missal or the Breviary which is not sober and restrained. It is outside the Liturgy that these devotions become florid and extravagant, with prayers, hymns, litanies, and processions in which fervour often seems to have swallowed up most of the critical faculty, either theological or artistic, of those responsible. But the Lord God must say, as of much else, 'My people love to have it so'. It is only fair to say of such extra-liturgical devotions that their appreciation is very much a matter of temperament, but if one is tempted to take exception to some of the more exotic titles heaped upon Mary it is well to reflect that it would be difficult to find a title more extreme and open to misrepresentation than 'Mother of God'; and yet this title of Mary has the most respectable and solid theological background, to which the Church of England is pledged by its acceptance of the Council of Ephesus.

It is easy to be censorious about the religious practices of others, but before looking askance at the fervent devotions to the Madonna displayed by an Italian peasant it would be salutary to consider whether in fact this is less commendable than the apparent complete lack of any sense of the supernatural on the part of his English equivalent. For the truth which must never be forgotten when we look at popular devotion

to our Lady as a thing by itself, is that it cannot be separated from devotion to her Son, for anything that is offered to her is offered to him, and through him to God the Father, who as a true father accepts all the paltry and unworthy offerings of his children.

There is a saying in Greece that 'a village without an ikon is like a head without an eye', which expresses their feeling for the symbolic representation of our Saviour, his Mother, and the Holy Saints in pictorial form. To the Eastern Orthodox the ikon is in a very mystical way that which it represents. In somewhat the same way veneration of sacred images of the Blessed Virgin is probably, in the West, the most popular way of expressing the devotion of children for their Mother, as in a human family photographs and portraits are treasured with a fervour quite out of proportion to their value or artistic merit. Protestant objection to images, based on a misunderstanding of the Second Commandment, need not be considered here, but the accusation that to simple people particular images have a merit of their own is probably true. However, to a mystical temperament it is easy to identify the symbol with the person represented, and to deck such shrines with lamps, candles, and flowers has been found a human, and to many a satisfying, way of expressing devotion. Within the Church of England the Reformation made a clean sweep of shrines and images, but since the Catholic Revival in the last century there has been a reversal of this puritan aberration, for iconoclasm does not come naturally to the English temperament, and it is now quite common to see a statue of the Blessed Virgin in parish churches and even cathedrals, often surrounded by flowers and candles, while it is an impoverished place of worship which has not got some representation of Christ's Mother in picture or stained glass. It has been said that the Reformers threw the saints out of the door and they have crept back through the window! It is true that the artistic merit and sentimentality of many of the images and pictures of our Lady may well make it difficult for some temperaments to appreciate what they symbolize, but it is true of iconography, as of the sacraments and the priesthood, that 'the unworthiness of the minister hindereth not the effect'.

The miraculous shrines of our Lady, which are great centres of Marian devotion and which exist all over the world, are

strange phenomena demonstrating the intense desire of men and women for assurance of the supernatural world and for experience of miracles. And it would seem that God, as an indulgent father, does in fact grant these things to the simple-hearted. In his wisdom he has allowed our Lady to appear to chosen souls in many places all over the world. It is a strange reversal of the roles of the Annunciation: 'The Angel of the Lord appeared unto Mary' . . . and Mary has appeared at Walsingham, at Lourdes, at Fatima, and at more places than it would be possible to record here. Such an appearing, or some notable miracle associated with an image or picture of the Virgin, has been enough to create a pilgrimage shrine visited by crowds who have said, like the shepherds at Bethlehem, 'Let us go and see this wonder'. And so a great centre of devotion to our Lady has arisen, and the making of pilgrimage has come to be a recognized and popular religious exercise. In many of these new 'annunciations' our Lady has given a message the content of which may seem puzzling at first sight, but it has been said that God speaks to people in their own language and, while the things said at Fatima may be difficult for English people to understand, it is obvious that to the people of Portugal it has come as a message which has been the cause of a real religious revival. The restoration of the English shrine of our Lady of Walsingham in 1921 has had a remarkable effect among Anglicans of reviving pilgrimage as a popular devotion linked with devotion to our Lady.

The feasts in honour of the Mother of God belong to the liturgical life of the Church, but there is no doubt that many have begun as a popular devotion and have only later been given ecclesiastical authority. The greatest of these feasts are commemorations of events in the life of our Lady: her Conception, her Nativity, the Annunciation, her Assumption, or 'Falling asleep'. All these, except the last, have their place in the Prayer Book Calendar, although it too was retained in the Latin Prayer Book and has been officially restored in more than one Province of the Anglican Communion. In Latin countries these feasts are observed with great processions in honour of the Virgin, but, although the English rather like non-religious processions, their tendency to puritanism makes them afraid of enjoying their religion, while the climate of their country does

not always lend itself to out-of-door demonstrations. The observance of the month of May as a special month of devotion to Mary still has odd survivals in England in the crowning of the May Queen and other curious folk-ceremonies, but it does not play a very great part in the religious life of the country.

It is the singing of hymns which must be reckoned the most popular of Anglican devotions and in this the Church of England has been very well served for, while some Roman Catholic hymns in honour of our Lady probably represent hymnody at its lowest level, such Anglican hymns as 'Her virgin eyes saw God Incarnate born', 'Virgin-born, we bow before Thee', 'Shall we not love thee, Mother dear?', and 'Ye who own the faith of Jesus', deserve to rank among the purest expressions of devotion to our Lord's Mother in verse.

Many societies and confraternities have been formed within the Church to foster and encourage popular devotion to our Lady, and whole religious congregations have been founded under her patronage and with the special object of giving her particular honour. The only two Marian Societies in the Church of England which enjoy any considerable membership are the Society of Mary and the Society of Our Lady of Walsingham, but there are many religious communities who have her as their patron, as also does the Mother's Union with its very large membership and its banners, which bring a note of Marian piety into the most unlikely churches.

Of all the devotions to our Lady it is perhaps the saying of the Rosary which has gained the widest popularity. Although the introduction of this devotion is claimed as the work of St Dominic, the custom of counting familiar prayers upon beads is very ancient and is used in the Orthodox Church for the recital of the Jesus Prayer. The rosary-beads are divided into units of ten, each connected with some mystery of the Faith which is held in the mind for consideration. So this devotion provides something to do, something to say, and something with which to occupy the mind. It has proved a simple way of prayer suitable both for the learned and the unlearned and is capable of leading souls to the higher forms of prayer. To see in some countries completely unlearned peasants holding their beads while their faces express the wrapt attention of a contemplative is to be made aware of this fact. An increasing

number of Anglicans use the Rosary, but it could hardly be described as a popular devotion in the Anglican Church, although any priest who has worked in country parishes knows the desperate need for some such simple prayer technique to bring their people into a living contact with God.

Yet although the Rosary is counted a devotion in honour of our Lady it is concerned with the mysteries of the whole Faith, and this is exactly as it should be, for devotion to the Mother of Christ always suffers if it is taken in isolation from the whole context of the great acts of God for man's redemption. There has always been a danger that popular devotion to our Lady taken in isolation may lead to the heresy of supposing that the Christian can persuade our Lord's Mother to grant some request which would not be granted by God. Unfortunately some prayers in popular use might be thought to lend colour to this and there are those who think the phrase 'Spes Nostra' used of our Lady in the anthem 'Salve Regina' is liable to be misunderstood, to give only one example. On the whole it would seem that the Orthodox custom of praising and honouring Mary in the context of the Liturgy is the purest stream of devotion, although those who think that the language used is a restrained and moderate form of Marian devotion can hardly have studied the sacred texts.

The greatest of all Marian prayers is the 'Hail Mary', and this combines both the strains of praising Mary and asking for her prayers in their simplest and most unexceptionable form. Composed from the words of Holy Scripture and well-weighed theological phrases, it is also the great prayer in honour of the Incarnation, so that the praising and imploring of Mary is not made something isolated from the mysteries of our Faith which are the source of her privilege and her honour. Thus it might be said that popular devotion to the Blessed Virgin arises from the example of the Archangel Gabriel who first gave it expression when moved with wonder at her unique vocation and shining purity he cried out, 'Hail, Mary, full of grace!', the strain being taken up by her cousin Elisabeth, 'Blessed art thou amongst women', and, like a gathering flood, spreading from mouth to mouth over the whole earth till at this day Mary is praised and implored in a mighty cry from the whole body of those who belong to her Son, and will be to the end of time.

IX

Our Lady and the Reunion of Christendom

Augustine Morris, O.S.B.

WHEN the doctrine of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary was about to be proclaimed as a dogma by Pope Pius XII, it was widely feared that such a proclamation would be a severe setback to the hopes of Christian reunion. Not only those outside the Roman Church but also ecumenically minded Roman Catholics felt and expressed these apprehensions. Whether these anticipations have been justified by the event is open to question.

Certainly the facts would seem to belie the fears. The ecumenical movement has made big strides in the few years which have followed the proclamation. Progress has been made in the movement among Protestants: it has also continued between Rome and the Orthodox and Anglicans and Protestants. While it is obvious that this progress has in no sense been a direct outcome of the proclamation of the dogma of the Assumption, it would certainly seem that the proclamation has not been followed by that worsening of the ecumenical position which was feared by many, including, I must add, myself. In point of fact there was little practical change. There was no new hardening of the papal position, which remained what it had been since the proclamation of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in 1854 and of papal infallibility in 1870. The doctrine of the Assumption had been universally believed by Roman Catholics prior to its proclamation as a dogma, and continued to be so believed, although in part on a new basis. At the same time the measured and restrained language of the Papal Bull brought some reassurance.

It remains a fact however that devotion to our Lady is a question which still divides Catholics and Protestants. Indeed, it ranges Catholics and Orthodox on one side and Protestants

on another: Professor Bulgakov, for instance, has said that the absence of devotion to Mary is the most marked difference between Protestantism and Orthodoxy.¹

It would be both idle and mistaken to suggest that for the sake of charity towards their Protestant brethren in Christ and for the advancement of reunion Catholics and Orthodox should lay aside their devotion to the saints and most of all to the Mother of God. Nevertheless these motives are by no means unworthy and they should have their weight. They do impose certain duties on Catholics with regard to such devotion: and in observing these duties we shall be the more, and not the less, honouring our Lady and the whole company of heaven, for we shall be making it possible for others to understand better why such honour is paid and perhaps to join in paying it. On whom do such duties towards our Protestant brethren press more urgently than upon Catholic-minded Anglicans?

It has been often said that where there is devotion to Mary, devotion to Christ flourishes: lack of devotion to her loosens the grip of faith in him. However much we may believe this to be generally true, if we are to be fair-minded we have to recognize that there are very many excellent Christians who, without having a devotion to Mary in the Catholic sense, yet have a profound faith in her incarnate Son, a theologically sound knowledge of him, and an unwavering love of and devotion to him. And it should not be too readily supposed that Protestantism has no place for devotion to her, as the following quotation from Calvin shows: 'When this canticle [the *Magnificat*] is recited, we shall profit by it when we show that we have fully understood its doctrine that the Virgin Mary not only bore Jesus Christ in his human nature in her womb, but also in her heart and in her whole mind and spirit, and that she was filled with many virtues.'²

The most obvious, though not the most important, among the duties of Catholics towards Protestants in their practice and presentation of devotion to Mary lies in the sphere of aesthetics. It is true that genuine devotion can be expressed through the medium of crude art, sentimental music, trivial poetry, and of

¹ *L'Orthodoxie*, p. 164.

² Cf. the interesting article 'La Mariologie de Calvin', by B. D. Duprey, O.P., in *Istina* 1958, p. 479.

prayers phrased in flowery, turgid, and pedestrian prose. We do not have to be artistic snobs: devotion itself matters far more than its expression. All the same, the expression is important, both as a means of sounder and deeper devotion, and perhaps even more for the sake of leading others to understand and share in it. It will hardly be denied that many expressions of devotion to our Lady have been puerile and pretty-pretty, more likely to repel than to encourage serious-minded Christians who encounter them for the first time.

It is of even greater importance that our devotion to our Lady should arise from sound doctrine. Anything, for instance, which seems to suggest that devotion to Mary should alone be the normal practice of the laity who should leave to the priesthood the dangerous privilege of direct prayer to God is as false as it is repulsive: happily any such practice among Roman Catholics has been largely put to flight, particularly through Pope St Pius X's advocacy of frequent communion for all devout Christians.

Similarly anything that suggests that devotion to Mary offers an easy way of salvation without complying with the will of God is both ill-founded and dishonouring to her. It cannot be too clearly understood that her will is his will: 'Be it unto me according to thy word' is her attitude not only at the moment of the incarnation, but everlastingly; and that attitude is her glory. 'Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it' is her ceaseless message to us. If she pleads—as certainly she does—for mercy for us sinners, it is because it is his will that she should so plead. The picture of a tender-hearted human mother turning away the wrath of an angered divine Father may be dramatically satisfying, but it is theologically unsound. He has mercy because she pleads for mercy, yes indeed: but he has beforehand willed that she should offer this plea. His merciful love is greater, even infinitely greater than hers; and it is part of the merciful design of his providence that he has constituted her towards us as Mother of Mercy. The Jesuit poet rightly speaks of her

Whose presence, power is
Great as no goddess's
Was deemèd, dreamèd,

and yet also as her

Who
This one thing has to do,
Let all God's glory through.³

The kind of way in which, as it seems to me, devotion to our blessed Lady can be rightly advanced is illustrated by the following extracts from a sermon by the late Dom Gregory Dix, which I permit myself to quote rather fully, here and there expanding the preacher's notes in order to give a connected sequence.

Later in this month of August we shall be observing the heavenly birthday of the apostle Saint Bartholomew. We shall rejoice in his reunion with his Master and in the thought of those graces of God which have brought him to heaven. We shall think of the happiness in the heart of our Lord as he welcomes Bartholomew: 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'

But if we keep a holy day to thank God for these things in the case of an apostle like Bartholomew, after all a rather obscure figure for us, would it not be absurd not to rejoice in the far greater joy in the reunion of the perfect Son with his Mother? Is it not right to thank God for those unique graces and gifts of God by which he fitted her for the most sublime vocation any human being has ever fulfilled? 'Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' But she is the solitary *good* servant of Christ in the absolute sense, the only unflinchingly *faithful* servant he has ever had. . . .

Let us think of the magnificent promises of our Lord to his servants in the letters to the seven churches at the beginning of the book of Revelation. 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' 'He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.' 'He shall be arrayed in white garments and I will in no wise blot him out of the book of life.' 'I will give him the morning star.' 'I will make him a pillar in the temple of God.' 'He that overcometh, I will make him to sit down with me in my throne.'

These promises are made to such people as the lukewarm Laodiceans and the careless Christians of Sardis. It is no wonder that when the Church came to meditate on the destiny of the

3 *The Blessed Virgin Compared to the Air we Breathe*, G. M. Hopkins.

Mother of God she should have turned to this book, the only one in the New Testament which is meant to give us a picture of heavenly things. The Church realized that if these promises were true about anyone in the world to come, they must be supremely true of blessed Mary. And so these words were rightly transferred particularly to her in the picture formed in the minds of faithful Christians of the homecoming of the Mother of Jesus.

She must eat by right of the tree of life, not like the first Eve tempting Adam to his fall, but standing beside the second Adam in his victory on the tree of Calvary.

'He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.' What had the second death to do with her, the spotless one in whom judgement had no work to do? And so the church came to her belief that for blessed Mary's body, the shrine that had given birth to the God-man, which had given to her Child that blood which was the price of all redemption, from which had been taken that body which rose again on Easter Day—for blessed Mary's body there could be no holding of death until judgement. She could not be judged for she had no sin. For her the resurrection of the body which will one day happen to us all has already taken place. . . .

'He that overcometh, I will make him to sit down with me in my throne.' Here she is, the Queen of all the Cinderellas in history: the humble peasant girl; the carpenter's wife, brought to bed in a stable; the refugee in Egypt; the mother of whom ill-natured neighbours said she was no better than she ought to be (she was not spared that taunt); the poor widow, who watched her Son die in agony because the great ones of the world feared this young man and put him out of the way; the silent humble old woman of the people, whose life was over for all that mattered, praying in obscurity for twelve or twenty years after the Ascension: and then—the Queen of heaven.⁴

This sermon was preached by Dom Gregory on Sunday, 10 August 1941, at Beaconsfield. Let me quote also from another sermon, preached far away from Beaconsfield, in Moscow, by the Patriarch Alexis on 9 December 1957. It begins on a note which the earnest Protestant, zealous for the glory of God alone, might well regard as superstitious, but it will be seen how Mary leads to Jesus.

4 I owe this whole passage to Father Marcus Stephens, S.S.M., and to his mother, who transcribed Dom Gregory's sermon notes.

On the ikon in front of which we are praying to-day is portrayed a sinner who, according to what tradition says, used daily to address his heartfelt prayers to the Mother of God in spite of his repeated sins. The Queen of heaven heard his petitions and gave him joy. She led him to understand that he, unhappy man, was defiled with sins. She aroused in him repentance. And this consciousness of his guilt and this sincere repentance filled this sinner with profound joy and a sense of spiritual liberation. We also ought thus to pray to the Mother of God that she may help us to recognize ourselves as miserable sinners. This humble realization of our unworthiness will make us likewise taste the great joy of interior spiritual freedom. Our anxieties will then be seen in an entirely different light, as something we have deserved, so that we take them upon ourselves more freely and more generously. In this way we shall find the words of Christ to be true: 'Seek first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added unto you.'

The Patriarch ended his sermon thus: 'By the prayers of the Mother of God I wish you, dear brothers and sisters, many joys in your lives, but above all the joy of spiritual freedom, and I invoke upon you all the compassion and goodness of the Queen of heaven.'⁵

I have above suggested that in these days of ecumenism and of growing charity, mutual respect and understanding between Christians of different traditions, Catholics have a duty towards Protestants in their practice and presentation of devotion to the saints, especially to the Blessed Mother. Will it not be fair to say that Protestants have a duty to their Catholic and Orthodox brethren likewise? Many Protestants do indeed realize this, but not all.

There is first, I would suggest, a duty of truth, to make sure that in any criticism they do not misrepresent what they may feel bound in conscience to reprehend. Let them seek to lay aside prejudice and examine what Catholics have to say on the subject with a brotherly eye.

Secondly, in doing this they will avoid the language of sarcasm, bitterness, and scorn. I have, alas, to record as an instance the sarcastic expression of an Anglican bishop in a

⁵ Quoted from the 'Review of the Patriarchate of Moscow', 1957, in *Irenikon* 1959, p. 188.

letter, 'the assumed Assumption of the Blessed Virgin'. Worse examples might of course be given, which would be rather indications of uncharitableness and self-righteousness in their writers than valid contributions to a discussion. Those who are tempted to use such language about the devotion of simple people should reflect that such devotion is the outcome of the practical spiritual experience of thousands or rather millions of faithful servants of God and lovers of Christ. So vast a volume of spiritual experience is at least an impressive thing. Certainly there are also good Christians who have neither had nor sought such experience. Indeed they do not think it right to seek it, but even so it will surely not be wrong for them to speak with respect of what is dear to their brothers in Christ.

And I would suggest that in the third place Protestants should examine themselves seriously as to whether their own spiritual practice may not be deficient in regard to Blessed Mary and the company of heaven, perhaps as an over-reaction against what appear to them to be Catholic superstitions. It does none of us harm to attempt to see ourselves as others see us. In Orthodox eyes, as the above quotation from Professor Bulgakov shows, in this matter Protestants are sadly lacking in what to the Orthodox (as to the Catholic) is an integral part of Christianity.

I do not mean to imply that Protestantism knows no sort of devotion to Blessed Mary: the above quotation from Calvin proves the contrary. Nor am I asking that the walls of (say) the Baptist Chapel should echo the chant of the Litany of Loretto! Yet, building upon the biblical texts and the early Fathers of the Church—fathers of us all—Protestants would surely do well to foster a greater sense of fellowship or rather of close kinship with those friends of ours, fellow members of Christ, whose warfare, unlike our own, is over, and who are now *living* with a life far fuller than our own; and most of all with Christ's own Mother, who in that world as she was in this, is surely the dearest human object of his love.

If devotion to our Lady is still a cause of separation between Protestants and their other Christian brothers, it is far otherwise in the relationship between Catholics and Orthodox. Let us hear a Roman Catholic voice first, that of Father Gervase Mathew, O.P. 'The links between Catholic and Orthodox

extend to every detail of popular religion . . . the Mother of God is always invoked, always so close at hand, Mother to each one of us, as well as Mother of Christ: *Panaghia Glycophilousa*.⁶ It is the consciousness of the common Motherhood which forms the closest bond between all Eastern Christians and those of our communion in the West.⁷

And now an Orthodox voice, that of Professor Bulgakov, who led an Orthodox pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1958. He writes after his visit: 'The remembrance of this place embalmed by the presence, invisible to our eyes but clearly perceptible to our souls, of the most holy Mother of God . . . will remain among the dearest memories of our lives. At least in our hearts the interior dividing wall which separates us from the Roman Church has lost much of its opaqueness.'⁸

Now let us see these sentiments being expressed in practice. In 1960 the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Boston, U.S.A., presided over a public meeting of some 25,000 persons in the Boston College Stadium, at which not only his co-religionists but also many Orthodox were present. Ikons from local Orthodox churches were displayed, the famous *Akathistos* hymn to Mary was recited, and a living Rosary was formed, the five mysteries being recited in Arabic, Greek, Armenian, Russian, and English. The Cardinal said that the presence of both Catholics and Orthodox at services honouring the Virgin Mary proved that there was a desire for greater love and understanding among separated Christians. 'Mary', he said, 'offers great hope of reconciliation. . . . We cannot separate the Son from his Mother, nor have the millions of Eastern Orthodox done this any more than we.'⁹

Finally let us heed the words of the late Pope John, who as is well known had much experience of the Christian East, particularly as Apostolic Delegate to Constantinople. A recent writer, speaking of those days, rightly says that the unswerving loyalty of the East towards the Mother of God seemed to the future Pope to be of the very greatest importance in the very delicate matter of the reconciliation of the Churches. 'That is why,' the writer continues, 'he deplored the fact that our Lady

6 The Sweetly-kissing All-holy One, name of an ikon of our Lady in one of the monasteries on Mount Athos.

7 *Sobornost*, Winter 1950, p. 336.

8 *Irenikon*, 1959, p. 202.

9 *Unitas*, Winter 1960, p. 275.

was given no place in the present ecumenical movement.' And when he was Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Roncalli closed the message in which he urged his people to take part in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity in 1954 with the following words: 'May Holy Mary, our loving Mother, who is so venerated among Eastern Christians and is always waiting for the Christians of Northern Europe to turn to her, she who never forgets anyone—may she bless and watch over this Unity Octave.'¹⁰

Hitherto this chapter has dealt in the main with *devotion* to our Lady as a dividing or unifying factor among Christians of different traditions. It is time to turn to our Lady *herself* and I can best do so by quoting another Orthodox, the Archimandrite Lev Gillet, who with other members of the Fellowship of Saint Alban and Saint Sergius went on pilgrimage to our Lady of Walsingham in 1949. His words may be compared with those of Professor Bulgakov after his visit to Lourdes quoted above. The Archimandrite Gillet writes, 'I shall only say that at Walsingham one strongly feels the hope that the person and prayer of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, may act as a powerful magnet to draw and unite all Christians.'¹¹

Mary, Mother of Christ, is also Mother of all Christians. Saint Augustine says of her that 'she is clearly the mother in spirit of us his members. For by her charity she worked with him so that faithful ones, members of him the head, should be born in the Church.'¹² And many Christians through the ages, meditating on our Lord's words from the cross to his Mother and the beloved disciple, 'Woman, behold thy son.' 'Behold thy mother', have seen in them not only his care for the welfare of Blessed Mary, but also, behind and above this immediate concern, his committal of us all in the person of Saint John to her motherly solicitude.¹³

If I have understood
She holds high motherhood
Towards all our ghostly good.¹⁴

Now in any human family it is part of the mother's vocation

¹⁰ *Unitas*, Autumn 1961, pp. 198, 192.

¹² *De sancta virginitate*, VI, 6.

¹³ Jn 19:26, 27. Such *double entendre* is of course frequent in St John's Gospel.

¹⁴ G. M. Hopkins, *op. cit.*

¹¹ *Sobornost*, Winter 1949, p. 245.

to be the centre of peace and unity in the family, to be the reconciler of quarrelsome children. If still in heaven Jesus our Lord in his sacred humanity 'ever liveth to make intercession for us',¹⁵ then she who of all the human race is far closest to him shares in that continuing intercession. If still in heaven he prays his high-priestly prayer, 'that they all may be one',¹⁶ then she, whose will is wholly united with his, offers the same prayer for all those whom he has committed to her charge.

Certainly therefore it is right to see the prayers of Mary, mother of all Christians, as a great unifying power drawing us into unity with one another. We shall see this even more clearly if we meditate on the part which God has called her to fulfil in his Church. In one of the apocalyptic visions of John in the Revelation, the seer beholds the figure of a woman: 'And there appeared a great wonder in heaven; a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars. And she being with child cried, travailing in birth, and pained to be delivered. . . . And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up unto God and to his throne.'¹⁷

It would not be right to *identify* this symbolic figure with Mary: the 'woman' of the Apocalypse is a visionary figure. Yet the figure represents at once both Mary, the mother of the ruler of all nations, and the Church, mother of the 'seed which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ'.¹⁸ The fact that the same figure symbolizes both at once shows how close is the relationship between Mary and the Church. This being so, we can be the more confident that the reunion of the Church is dear to Mary's heart.

'Alas, through the ages the seamless garment of our Lord has often been torn and it is still torn now.' These were the words of the late Pope John in 1957.¹⁹ There is a tradition, not of early date, that the seamless robe was woven by the hands of Christ's Mother: it seems likely enough. Is it too fanciful that she should be asked to repair the rents which the sins of men have torn in the robe she made?

It is to-day the duty of all Christians to pray for the restoration

¹⁵ Heb 7:25.

¹⁶ Jn 17:21.

¹⁷ Rev 12:1-5.

¹⁸ Rev 12:17.

¹⁹ *Unitas*, Autumn 1961, p. 195.

of the visible unity of the whole Church of Christ. In approaching him with this object in view, we can pray a common prayer. By reason of theological differences, it is not possible for there to be such universal common prayer to seek the intercession also of Blessed Mary to the same end. Yet surely it is the duty of all those Christians whose principles allow them to do so to ask her powerful aid for the fulfilment of this end, so dear to the heart of her Son. When we put this urgent request before her, we are but asking her to fulfil yet more effectively that vocation of Mother which is her glory to eternity.

Mary, Mother of Christ, Mother of all Christians, draw us all into that unity which your Son desires.

